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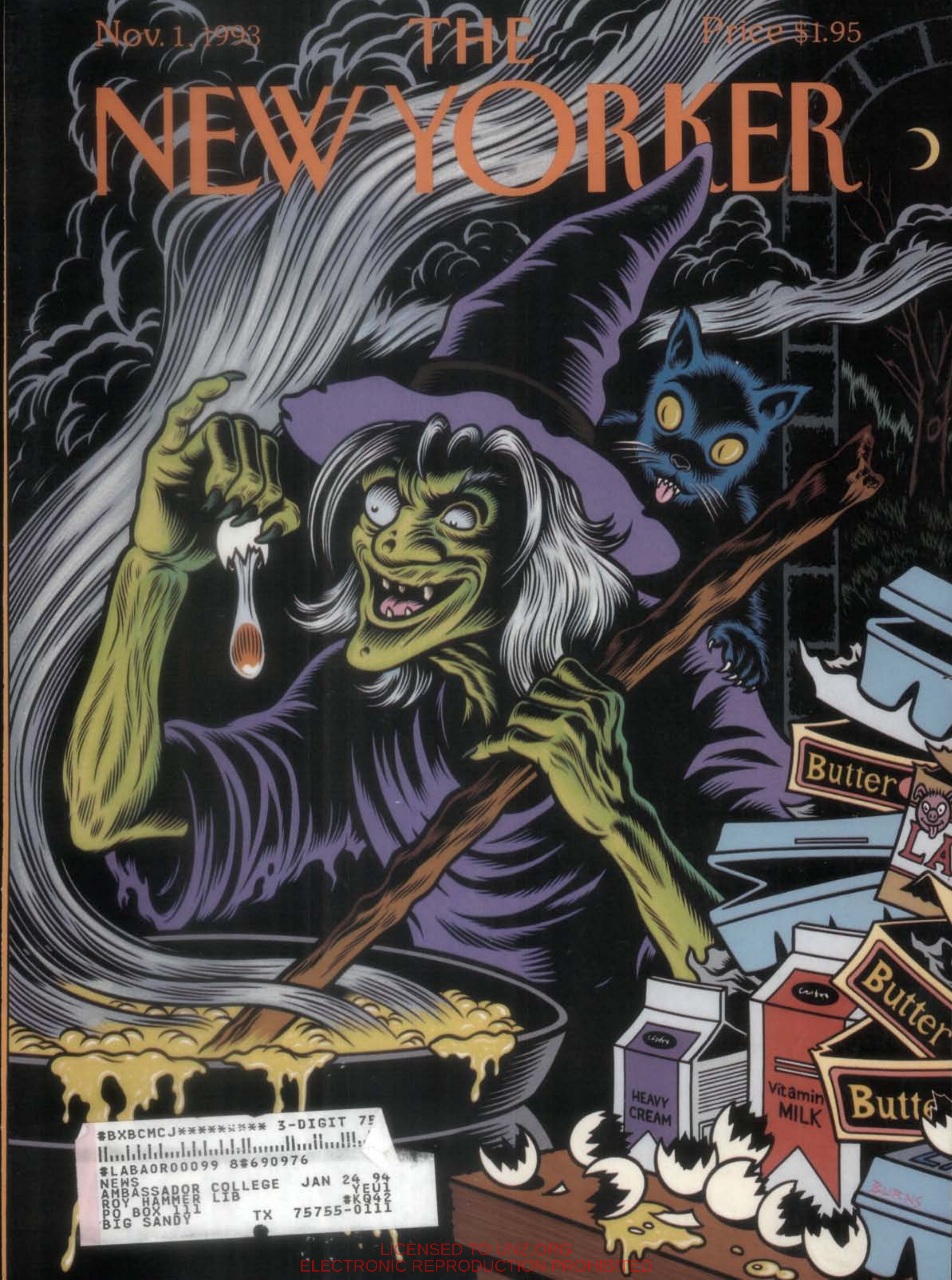
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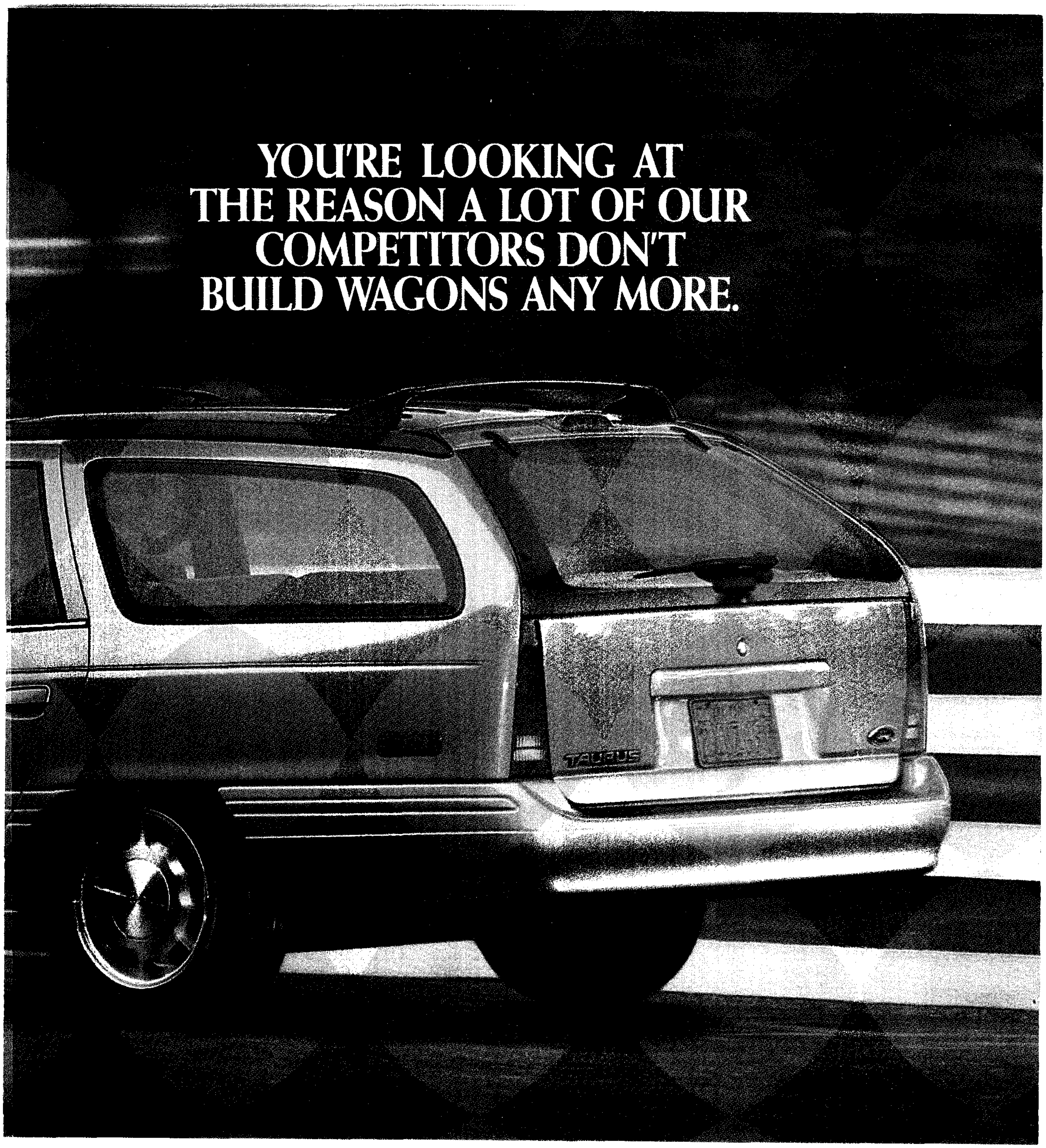
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NOVEMBER 1, 1993

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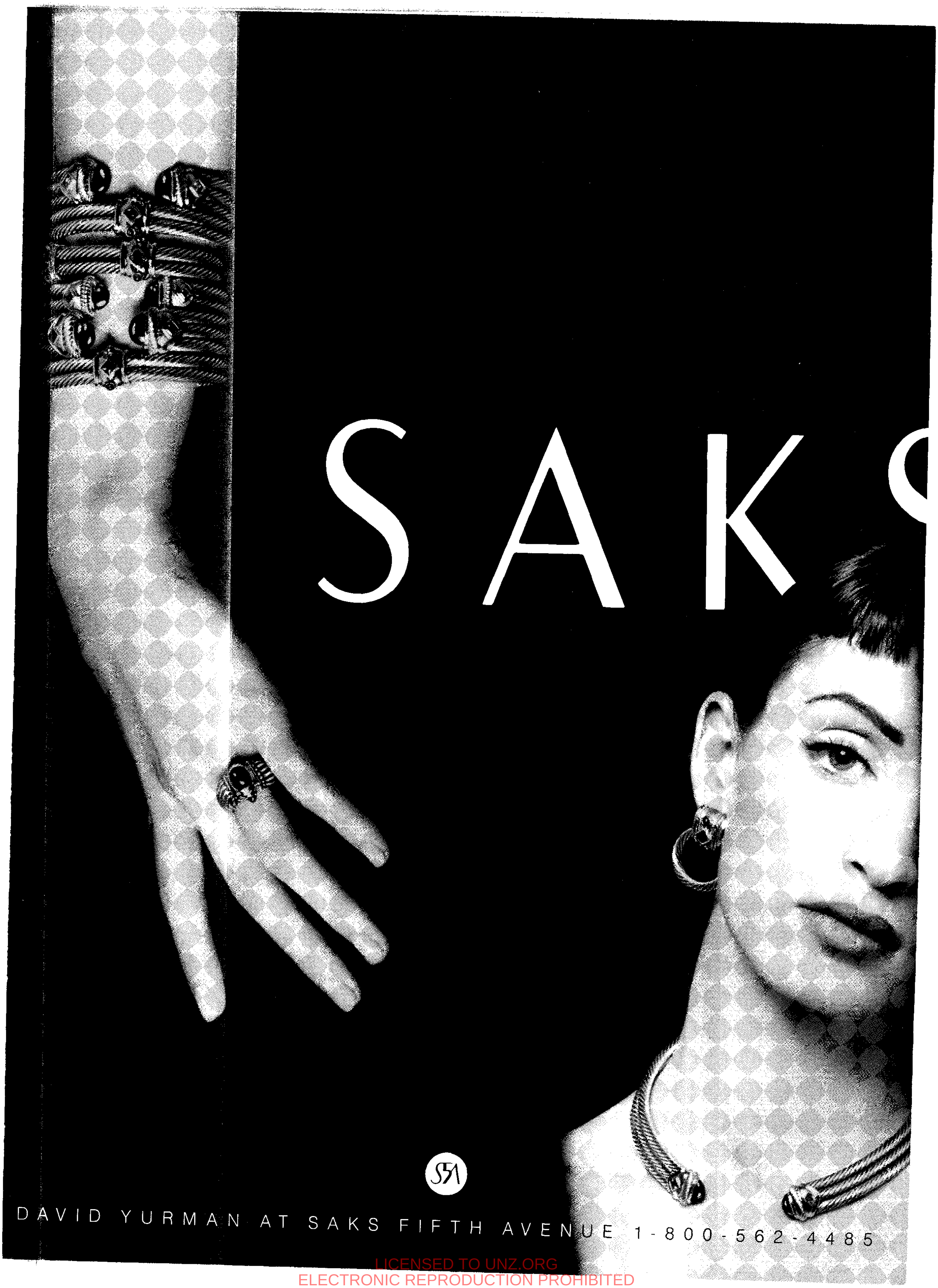

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COMMENT

RACE, CRIME, AND THE MAYORALTY

A NUMBER of theories are floating around as to why David Dinkins is in such trouble in his campaign to be reëlected mayor of New York on November 2nd. President Clinton voiced one of them during his visit to the city a few weeks ago. "This is not as simple as overt racism," Mr. Clinton said, speaking without notes but choosing his words with evident care. "That is not anything I would charge to anybody who doesn't vote for David Dinkins or Bill Clinton or anybody else. It's not that simple. It's this deep-seated reluctance we have, against all our better judgment, to reach out across these lines."

The lines the President was referring to are the lines of race, and thus did he speak with unusual (for a politician) candor about that most nettlesome of American questions. But the limits of partisan discourse meant that he could not be similarly candid about the man he had come to town to endorse. Had he been able to do that, he might have said something like this: "Look, we all know that Dinkins has been only a so-so mayor—no big accomplishments, no big catastrophes. But his opponent is no prize, either. This city has five times as many Democrats as Republicans, and Dinkins is the Democratic candidate. If he were a white mediocrity running for reëlection against another white mediocrity, let alone a black one, he might run the risk of winning by a lot less than a landslide. But he wouldn't be in much danger of actually losing."

The President couldn't say that, of course; the closest he came to a frank assessment was to call the Mayor a man "who has a good record, who has a good plan, who has a good heart." Praise less faint would have been unbelievable and therefore impolite. And, while Mr. Clinton's analysis of the racial factor in our mayoral election was sound up to a point, his Brotherhood Week rhetoric left out as much as it illuminated. In New York's ethnocultural demolition derby, no one gets a free ride. Ed Koch was (and is) a fussy Jewish bachelor from Greenwich Village—attributes that counted against as well as for him in his five mayoral campaigns. Similarly, the

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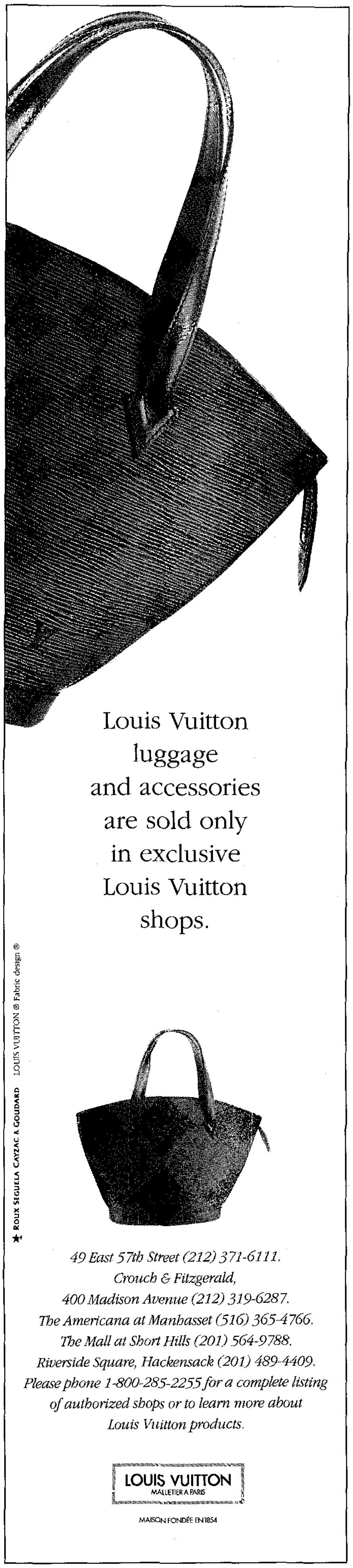

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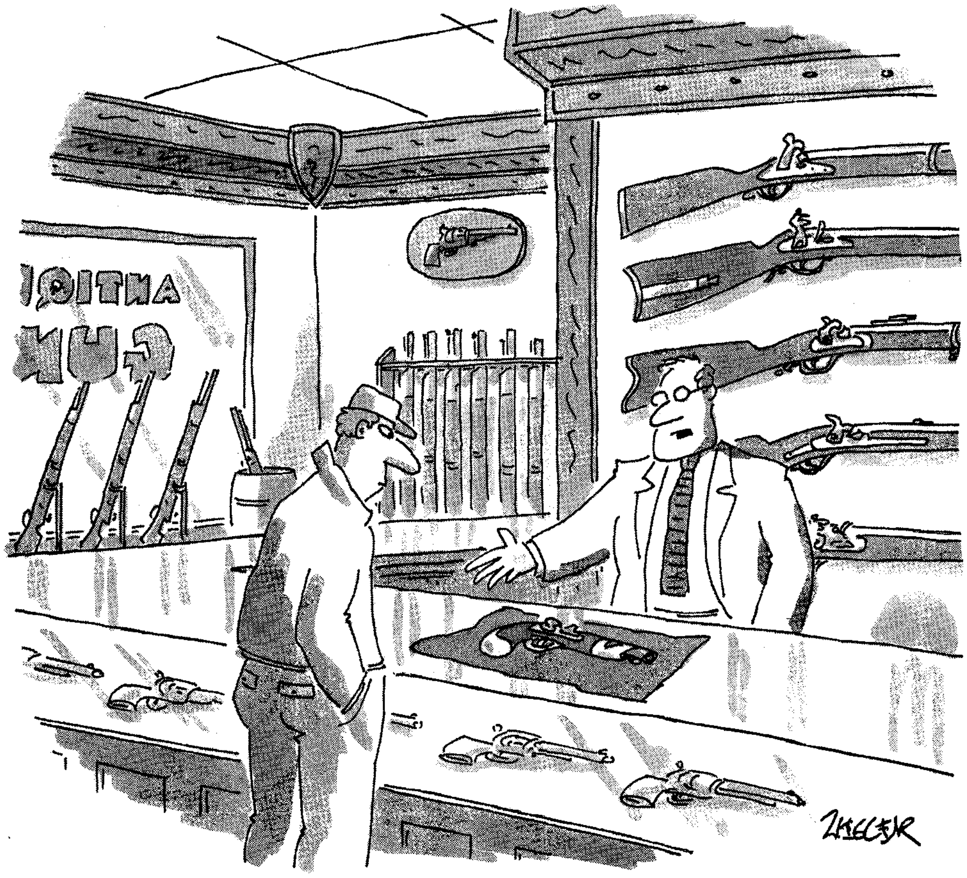
Italianness of Rudolph Giuliani, Dinkins's Republican opponent, is not a completely unmixed blessing. To be sure, race is different. "The reality of what everyone knows," as Senator Bill Bradley has put it, is that "as slavery was our original sin, so race remains our unresolved dilemma." It is true—and it is unfair—that Mr. Dinkins's race puts him at a disadvantage: Mr. Clinton was right. But Mr. Clinton was also wrong, because it is also true that if Mr. Dinkins were a stronger, more dynamic executive, if he were capable of inspiring voters with a sense of positive movement into the future—if, for example, he had more of the qualities that enabled the first black mayor of Chicago, the late Harold Washington, to be reëlected handily after winning by a hair the first time around—then the only question on November 2nd would be the size of his margin of victory.

Mr. Dinkins is in trouble less because of race—indeed, a recent Marist Institute poll showed that most voters agree with him that he is better able to reduce racial and ethnic tensions than Mr. Giuliani would be—than because New Yorkers feel physically insecure in their city. Crime is at the center of the issue of public safety, which also encompasses a range of other afflictions that give an air of menace to life in many parts of many cities, New York included: aggressive panhandlers, graffiti, violence in and around public schools. The Mayor could have made this issue his own. His record on it is quite respectable: his administration has added some six thousand officers to the police force, most of them on foot patrol, and the number of reported major crimes actually fell by twelve per cent between 1989 and last year. But he has utterly failed to give voice to the anger and frustration that people rightly feel. His complacent, emotionless recitals of encouraging statistics have come across as willful denials of the common experience. He has seemed stuck in an outworn paradigm on crime: law and order vs. civil liberties; conservatives vs. liberals; ethnic whites vs. blacks; those in control of the political system vs. those excluded; oppressors vs. victims.

This model is an anachronism. In 1993, outrage about violence and lack of public safety is universal. Blacks feel it at least as strongly as whites, liberals as strongly as conservatives, the powerless as strongly as the privileged. By falling back instinctively on identity politics, on the static politics of victimhood—a strange position for someone as powerful as the mayor of New York—Mr. Dinkins forfeits an issue about which the public's thinking is evolving rapidly. Though the public wants criminals removed from its midst immediately, there is a rising sense that punitive measures will never by themselves provide a real answer to crime. The notion of simply building more prisons as a practical solution has been refuted by experience. Prisons have become a new, crushingly expensive welfare state, outfitted with steel bars. Majorities understand that there must be more: innovations in education; innovative ways of dealing with young offenders (such as boot camps); gun control.

Mr. Dinkins has not had much to say about any of this—not even about gun control, on which he has a perfectly adequate record and his opponent is vulnerable. (As Associate Attorney General in the Reagan Administration, Mr. Giuliani lobbied against a bill to ban armor-piercing, or "cop-killer," bullets.) And what little he has said has been said mechanically. But the disappointment in Mr. Dinkins should not give rise to any illusions about Mr. Giuliani, who is, if anything, even less inspiring than the incumbent, has no experience in urban government or politics other than as a federal prosecutor and a mayoral candidate, and has a rigid, humorless temperament, wholly unsuited to the job he seeks. Mr. Giuliani has made tough-guy noises about crime, but his proposals to combat it—the death penalty, tougher parole policies, showy but evanescent crackdowns on street-corner drug dealing—have already been tried and found wanting. Nor has he offered serious proposals in any other area. That Mr. Dinkins, despite his thoroughly lacklustre performance, is on balance the superior—or less inferior—candidate says more about the dreariness of the choice before New York's voters than it does about the virtues of either man. No matter which emerges the victor, for the next four years the government of New York City seems destined to be guided by assumptions that, whatever value they may have had in the past, offer practically nothing for the future. ♦



"Of course, in those days they weren't so much interested in blowing people away as in just shooting them."

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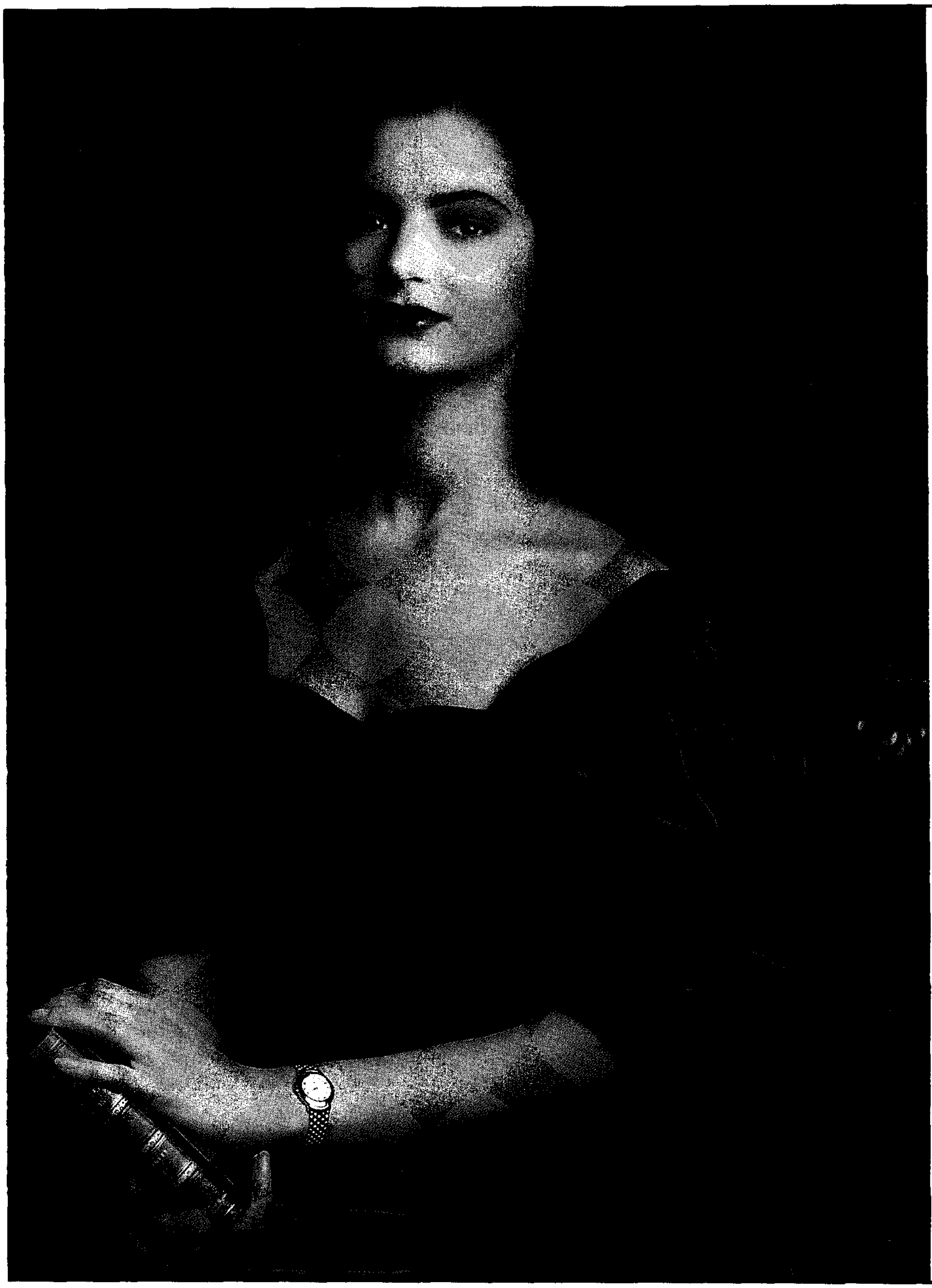

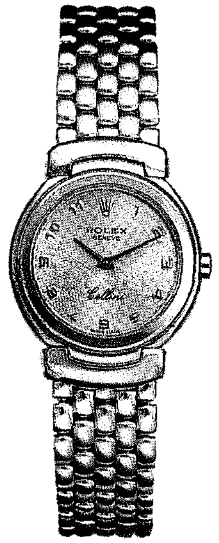

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IN THE MAIL

WHEN SEX IS A CRIME

In her review of my book, "The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism on Campus" (October 4th), Katha Pollitt chooses to fight against a cartoon version of my views—a cartoon she herself has drawn. I don't say, for example, that coerced intercourse is bad sex. I clearly state my belief that intercourse involving force or the threat of force is rape. What I am criticizing is an expanded definition of rape that includes verbal pressure, manipulation, and sex with someone who is even moderately intoxicated. Similarly, I am not "a self-proclaimed bad girl and sexual rebel." I have never proclaimed myself to be anything of the kind; instead, I emphasize the ordinariness of my experience.

Pollitt's leading example of what she calls my "slapdash research" is my reliance on "hearsay" in describing a female teaching assistant at the University of Michigan who felt sexually harassed by a male student's term paper. Pollitt must have missed the coverage of this incident in both the *Wall Street Journal* and *Harper's*.

Pollitt states that I "should know better than to rely on a short item in the Trenton *Times*" in explaining the significance of a New Jersey Supreme Court ruling. The fact is that my information comes straight from the New York *Times* coverage of the court papers. Pollitt implies that the two teen-agers were not involved in any consensual sexual activity, when, according to the court's opinion, they were.

Pollitt says that it is "absurd to suggest that the highly regarded New Jersey Supreme Court, which consists of one woman and six middle-aged men . . . had been corrupted by radical feminism." Actually, in their opinion they cite not one but several radical feminists.

Pollitt's distortions of my argument are clearly the product not of ignorance but of unchecked emotion. The fury beneath her words is a perfect expression of the spirit of the times, rigid, self-righteous, doctrinaire, that I try to describe in my book.

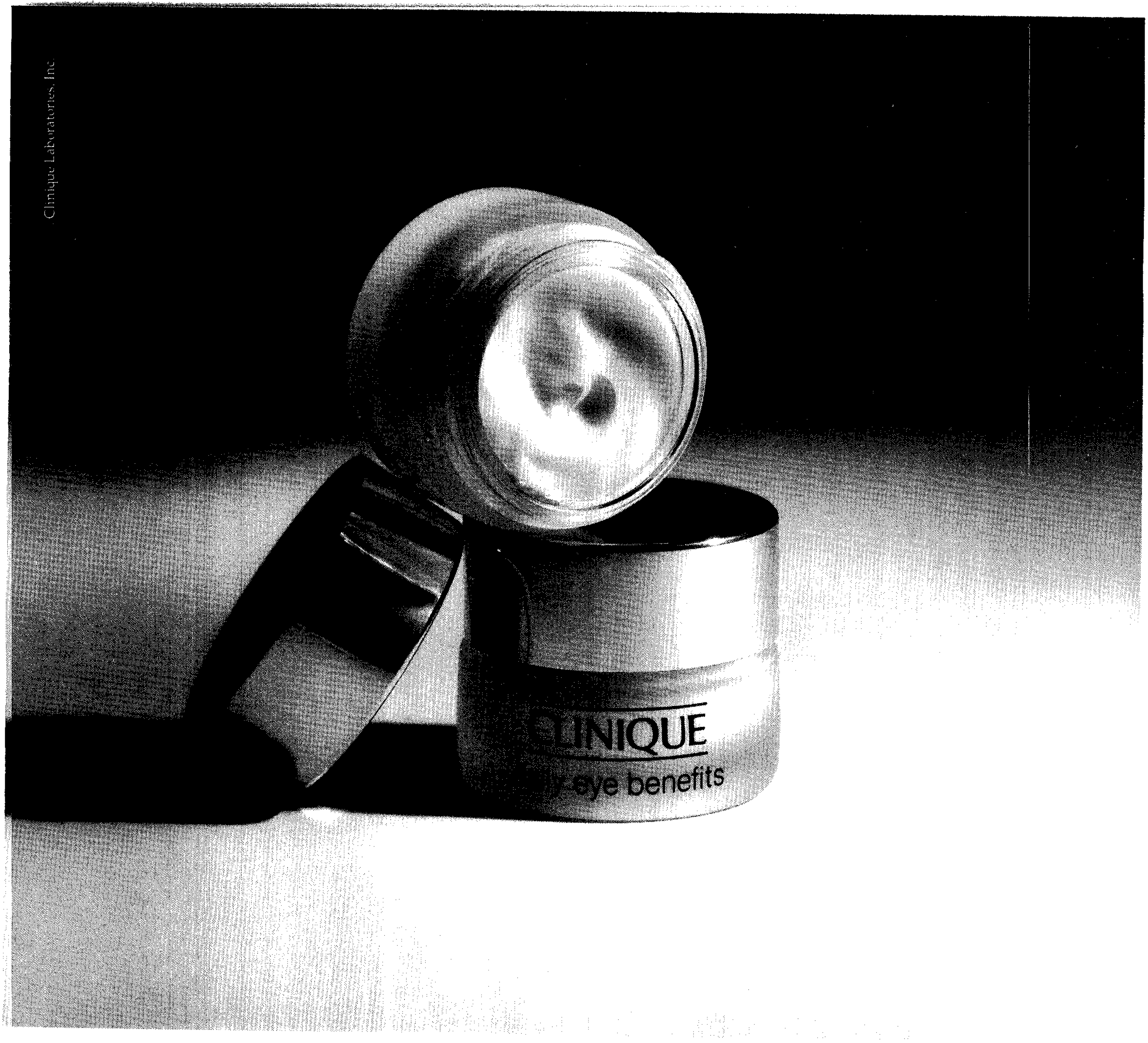
KATIE ROIPHE
New York, N.Y.

Brava to national treasure Katha Pollitt, who has shifted the debate about date rape back into the real world. She writes a path between ideological excesses at either end of the spectrum, finding a middle way that takes her further than those who over-identify with women's (all too real) victim status and those who are reacting with outright denial to the fact of that abuse.

One can—and should—welcome the rhetorical skills of a new writer such as Katie Roiphe while keeping in mind that, in the case of evidence about sexual assault, those who live by the anecdote must admit into the discussion the shocking, if commonplace, anecdotes of others. Pollitt's list of her own friends' experiences of sex crimes reminds us that testifying to the abuse of women is a more enduring achievement than creating a theory out of an impulse that we all share—the impulse to wish the terrible truth away.

NAOMI WOLF
Washington, D.C.

Katha Pollitt was astoundingly belligerent in her assault on Katie Roiphe's book—and on the author herself. "The general tone of her observations is unpleasantly smug" is about Ms. Pollitt's kindest cut, before she starts denigrating Ms. Roiphe's critical powers, citing the author's "privileged experience" and "adolescent certainty." Nuts to that. Did



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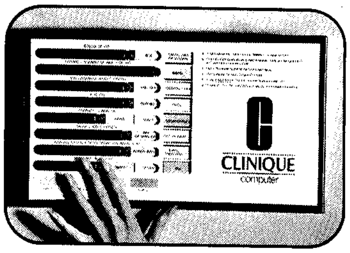

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THE KEY SWISS BANK

privilege inhibit Jane Austen's ability to take society's measure? Did it constrain Edith Wharton's intellect?

Those of us who whooped with exhilaration at the rebirth of the women's movement in the sixties, who grieved at its decline during the Decade of the Happy Wife, the eighties, are nonplussed by the Victims of the nineties. By victims we mean not the casualties of criminal rape or physical or sexual abuse but the submissive, the whiners, the passive-aggressors, the daughters of Emma Bovary and Anna Karenina.

Ms. Pollitt misrepresents Ms. Roiphe as an apologist for a status quo in which men are perpetually tumescent animals, free to mate with any female who takes their fancy. This is baloney: What Katie Roiphe is saying is that women should be *women*—full-fledged adults, who can defend and protect themselves. No one is saying that a woman who gets raped at a fraternity party is guilty of anything, or deserves to be hurt. What we are saying is that it is better for women to be smart rather than dumb, savvy rather than innocent, strong rather than weak, and, most of all, brave rather than fearful.

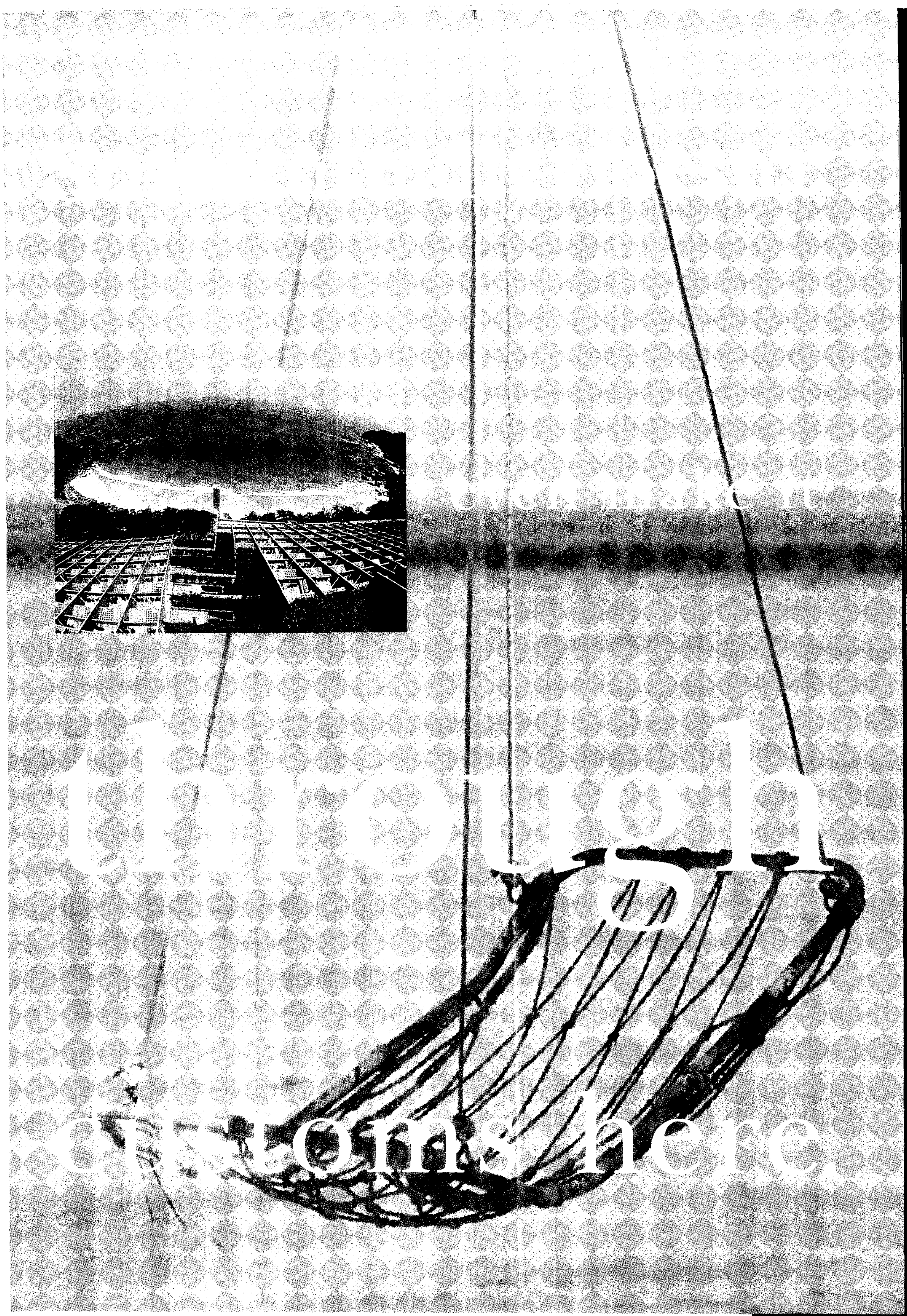
SUSAN ISAACS
Sands Point, N.Y.

Katha Pollitt replies:

Katie Roiphe's letter is not free of the slapdashery that characterizes her book. For example, the citations she now offers from the *Wall Street Journal*, *Harper's*, and the New York *Times* are absent from her book; and in the New Jersey case, while the court did conclude that consensual necking occurred, what Roiphe wrote in her book was that both parties "admitted" this—which is not true.

Susan Isaacs wants women to defend themselves vigorously, to be cautious at fraternity parties, and to keep their wits about them. This is essentially what those anti-rape brochures Roiphe mocks advise. Isaacs thinks women are insufficiently wary; Roiphe thinks they have little to be wary about. How these two people can find themselves in the same camp is a mystery.

Letters should be as brief as possible, and sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "In the Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They may be edited for length and clarity.



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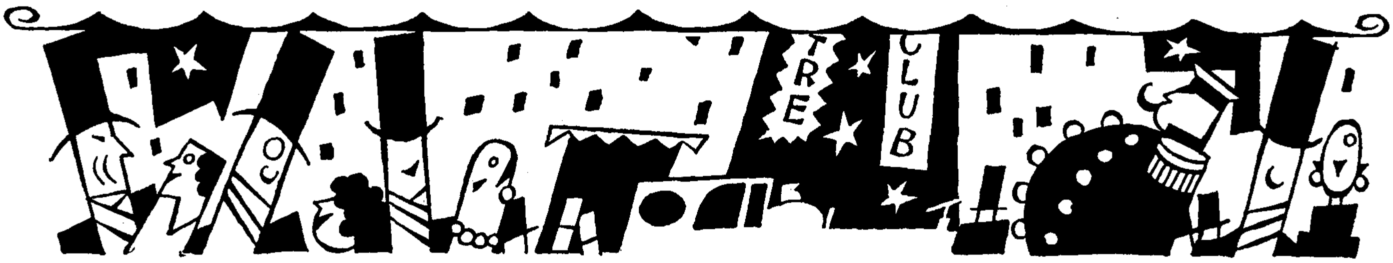

THE THEATRE

Heavy Prop

JIM GARY'S latest dinosaur skeleton is fifteen feet long and seven feet high, and it comes together upstage center every night in "Pterodactyls," Nicky Silvers' absurdist comedy about an AIDS-related homecoming, at the Vineyard Theatre. It is, in fact, not a pterodactyl but a raptorlike coelophysis, and it is constructed over the course of the evening by T. Scott Cunningham, who plays the returning son. The mother (Kelly Bishop) refers to the dinosaur as "a monument to the transience of everything."

There's nothing transient about Mr. Gary's interest in dinosaurs. He started making his prehistoric sculptures long before "Jurassic Park," which he likes, and Barney, whom he doesn't. "I guess it was about twenty years ago that I began assembling the creatures," he says, "and I've kept on, with hardly a breath for air, ever since." For his raw materials he uses automobile parts. "I use just about everything," he says. "Springs, valves, oil pans, pushrods, brake shoes, front-end suspensions." His sculptures have been exhibited at museums worldwide, including the Smithsonian, and reproduced in textbooks and fine-art publications. They are also on display at the gallery storefront that Mr. Gary operates in Farmingdale, New Jersey. As for his theatrical coelophysis, Mr. Gary says that "it looks kind of cute, but it wouldn't if it were real."

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

ANGELS IN AMERICA: PERESTROIKA—The second half of Tony Kushner's epic work is in previews, running in repertory with Part One, "Millennium Approaches." (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

CYRANO: THE MUSICAL—The Dutch actor Bill van Dijk has the title role in this new musical version of Edmond Rostand's play. The production originated in Amsterdam. In previews. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

DESDEMONA: A PLAY ABOUT A HANDKERCHIEF—Paula Vogel's comedy looks at "Othello" from the female characters' point of view. With J. Smith-Cameron as Desdemona, Fran Brill as Emilia, and Cherry Jones as Bianca. In previews. (Circle Repertory Company, 99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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31	1	2				

EATING CHICKEN FEET—A comedy by Kitty Chen, presented by the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre and the Women's Project. In previews. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 245-2660.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1994—A new edition of Gerard Alessandrini's parodies, including spoofs of "Angels in America," "Sunset Boulevard," and "The Who's Tommy." In previews. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

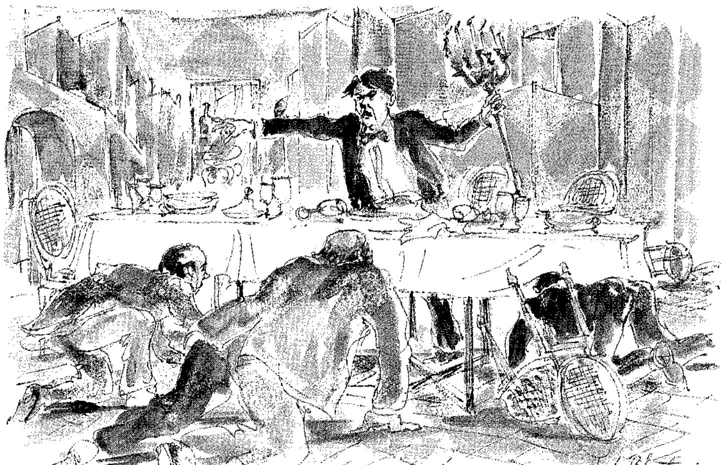
FOUR DOGS AND A BONE—A new play written and directed by John Patrick Shanley. Previews through Oct. 31 at 3. Opens Oct. 31 at 7:30. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

A GRAND NIGHT FOR SINGING!—An expanded version of the Rodgers and Hammerstein revue that played at Rainbow & Stars last spring. In previews. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

HOW THE OTHER HALF LOVES—The York Theatre Company presents the original version of a 1970 farce by the English playwright Alan Ayckbourn. (The 1971 Broadway production had been revised for American audiences.) Previews through Oct. 29. Opens Oct. 30 at 2:30. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 534-5366.)

JIMMY TINGLE'S UNCOMMON SENSE—The American Humorists Series continues with this solo show. Previews through Oct. 30. Opens Oct. 31 at 3. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAM COAT—Michael Damian heads a seventy-member cast in a new production of the musical by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber. In previews. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)


Brian Bedford in "Timon of Athens."

HANK BLAUSTEIN

THE LIGHTS—The Atlantic Theatre Company in a new play by Howard Korder. Mark Wing-Davey directed. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

THE LOMAN FAMILY PICNIC—A play by Donald Margulies about a Jewish family in Brooklyn during the sixties. Previews begin Oct. 28. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

THE MAYOR MUSICALS—An Election Eve concert of excerpts from "Knickerbocker Holiday," "Fiorello!," "Jimmy," and "Mayor." (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 388-2287. Nov. 1 at 8.)

A QUARREL OF SPARROWS—A comedy by James Duff, with Henderson Forsythe, Polly Holliday, Jan Hooks, Mitchell Lichtenstein, John C. Vennema, and Andrew Weems. In previews. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

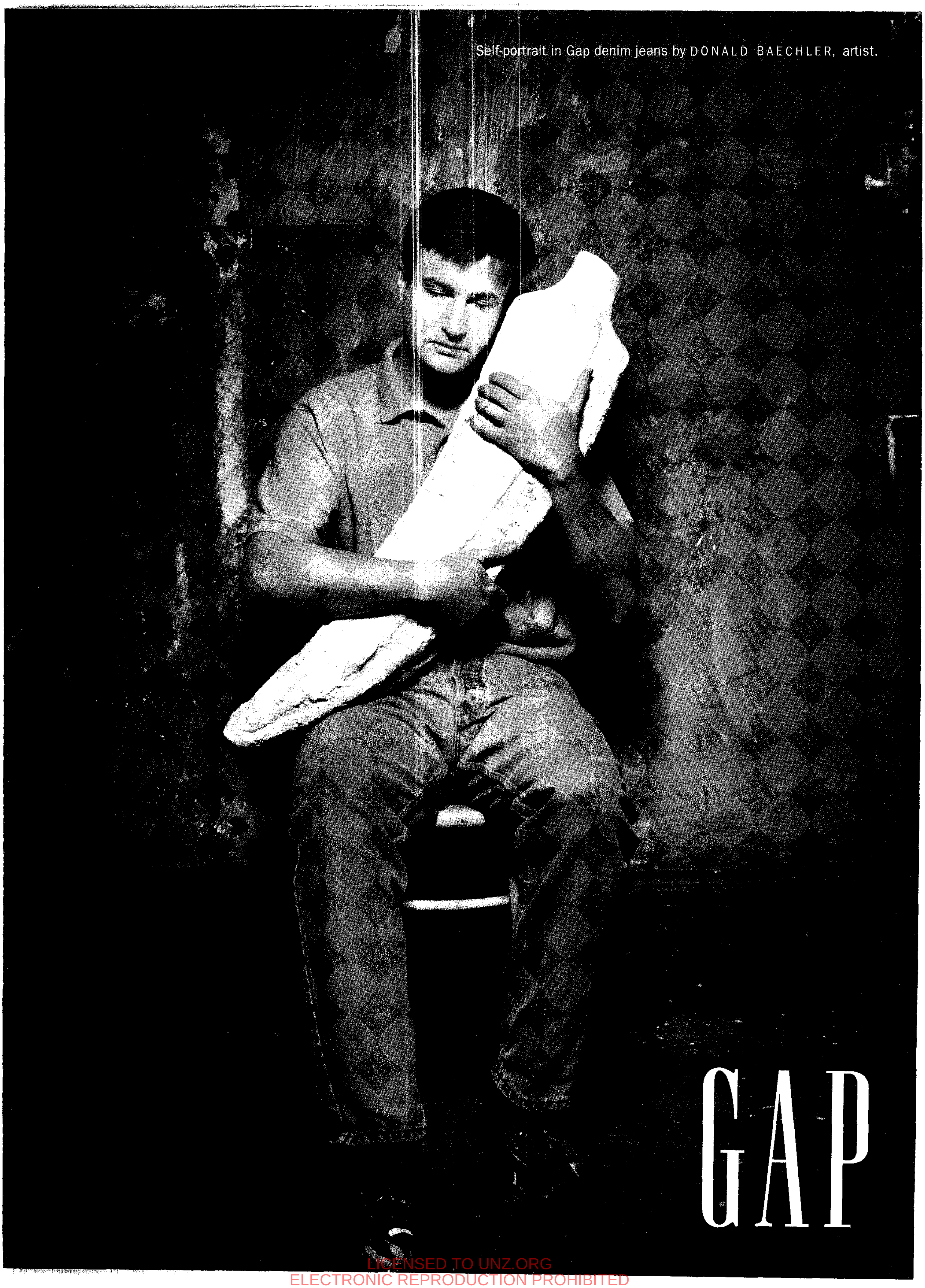
TIMON OF ATHENS—The National Actors Theatre launches its season with a rarely performed Shakespearean tragedy. This production, set in the Jazz Age, stars Brian Bedford and features a score by Duke Ellington. In previews. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6280.)

THE TREATMENT—Randy Danson and Daniel Von Bargen in a play by Martin Crimp, which premièred at London's Royal Court Theatre last April. Previews through Oct. 31. Opens Nov. 2 at 8. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

OPENED RECENTLY

ANGELS IN AMERICA: MILLENNIUM APPROACHES—The first half of Tony Kushner's epic work is set in 1985, at the height of the Reagan counter-revolution, and it maps the trickle-down effect of self-interest as Kushner's characters ruthlessly pursue their private and public destinies. The play is a saga about sexual politics, death, and decency. Not to be missed. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/31/93.) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

ANNIE WARBUCKS—Kathryn Zaremba, an infant phenomenon if ever there was one, has the title role in this beguiling sequel to "Annie." After sixteen years, the old team—Thomas Meehan (book) and Charles Strouse and Martin Charnin (music and lyrics)—is still in top form. With Donna McKechnie, Harve Presnell, Harvey Evans, Marguerite McIntyre, and Raymond Thorne, to say nothing of a merry scattering of orphans. (8/23 & 30/93) (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)


Self-portrait in Gap denim jeans by DONALD BAECHLER, artist.
GAP

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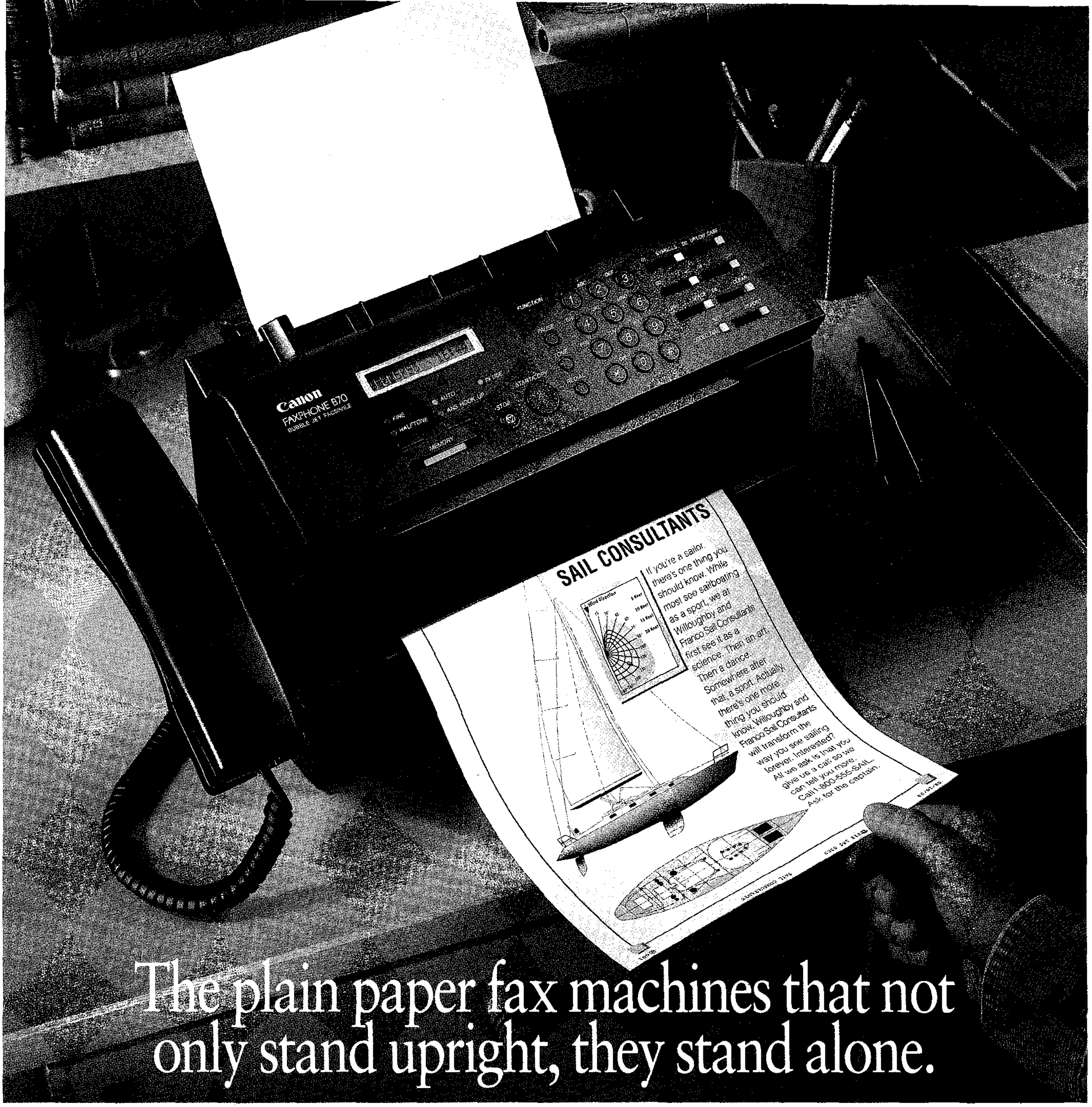
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THE THEATRE—Cont'd

Blood Brothers—A glum non-musical musical, imported from Britain, about twin boys who are separated at birth. The boys later become friends, love the same girl, and die violent deaths. Willy Russell wrote book, music, and lyrics, to no avail. The cast includes Shaun and David Cassidy and Petula Clark. (5/10/93) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Blown Sideways Through Life—In her sixty-fifth job, Claudia Shear charmingly and observantly tells us about her previous sixty-four, which have ranged from working in a hardware store as a child to being a "phone girl" in a whorehouse, with a stint as a Bloomingdale's cosmetics salesgirl thrown in. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 302-6989.)

Burning Bright—A 1950 play by John Steinbeck, adapted and directed by Damien Gray. (Workhouse Theatre, 41 White St. 431-9220. Closes Oct. 30.)

Family Secrets—Sherry Glaser is the sole, physically adept, very funny performer in this comedy about a Jewish family, which she wrote with Greg Howells. (Westside Theatre, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

The Fiery Furnace—Julie Harris stars in a play by Timothy Mason. Presented by Circle Repertory Company. (10/18/93) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Holly Near: Fire in the Rain—The feminist singer in an autobiographical play with music. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

Howard Crabtree's Whoop-Dee-Doo!—A witty and topical musical revue. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. For information about tickets, call 777-7474.)

In Persons—The actors Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson in a show about their lives in the theatre. Martin Charnin was the director. (10/18/93) (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Jeffrey—A comedy, by Paul Rudnick, about love in the age of AIDS. It is less a fleshed-out play than a series of Scenes from Gay Life, but Mr. Rudnick can quip with the best of them. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 420-8000.)

Kiss of the Spider Woman—A musical, based on the novel by Manuel Puig, with a distinguished book by Terrence McNally and a star performance by the redoubtable Chita Rivera, in the title role. Harold Prince was the director. The songs are by John Kander and Fred Ebb. (5/24/93) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Later Life—The reunion, after thirty years, of a middle-aged man and woman who were once in love is at the heart of this play by A. R. Gurney. Mr. Gurney has written with his customary wit and perception, and the actors do him proud. The play was seen recently at Playwrights Horizons. (6/14/93) (Westside Theatre, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

The Maids—Jean Genet's 1947 play, with Charles Busch and Seth Gilliam. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes Oct. 31.)

Marriage Play—Edward Albee's play about a couple going through a midlife crackup is disturbing, funny, violent, and not in the least sentimental. The roles are powerfully acted by Kathleen Butler and Tom Klunis (who originated them in Vienna in 1987), and the show is incisively directed by James Houghton, the artistic director of the Signature Theatre Company. (Kampo Cultural Center, 31 Bond St. 279-4200. Closes Oct. 31.)

Mixed Emotions—Katherine Helmond and Harold Gould in a romantic comedy by Richard Baer. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Pterodactyls—A dark comedy by Nicky Silver, with Kelly Bishop. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874. Closes Nov. 7.)

Shakespeare for My Father—A marvellous one-woman show, in which Lynn Redgrave reviews her own life in a search for her unloving father, Michael Redgrave. She combines anecdotes, brilliant thumbnail impersonations of British actors, and wry reminiscence with passages from Shakespeare. (5/10/93) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 944-9450.)

She Loves Me—The Roundabout's production of the 1963 Bock-Harnick-Masteroff musical. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

Snowing at Delphi—Six stereotypical New Yorkers take their problems upstate over Christmas. Although the playwright, Catherine Butterfield, seems unable to resist the easy joke or the obvious plot twist, the evening is still fun, and the performances of three of the actors—Arabella Field, Sam Tsoutsouvas, and John Christopher Jones—give it deeper interest. This is an early play that was resuscitated after the success of last year's very strong "Joined at the Head." (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523. Closes Nov. 7.)

Sophistry—A play by Jonathan Marc Sherman. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Nov. 7.)

S.S. Glencairn: Four Plays of the Sea—The Willow Cabin Theatre Company in a quartet of one-acts by Eugene O'Neill. (Harold Clurman, 412 W. 42nd St. 886-1889. Closes Oct. 31.)

The Twilight of the Golds—A play by Jonathan Tolins, starring Jennifer Grey, David Groh, Raphael Sbarge, Judith Scarpone, and Michael Spound. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Who's Tommy—Pete Townshend's music—however muted for Broadway—has an indubitable thrill. This adaptation was directed by Des McAnuff. (5/3/93) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Wonderful Tennessee—The Abbey Theatre's production of Brian Friel's new play. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Workroom—A play by Jean-Claude Gromberg, set in France during the Second World War. Translated from the French by Tom Kempinski. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

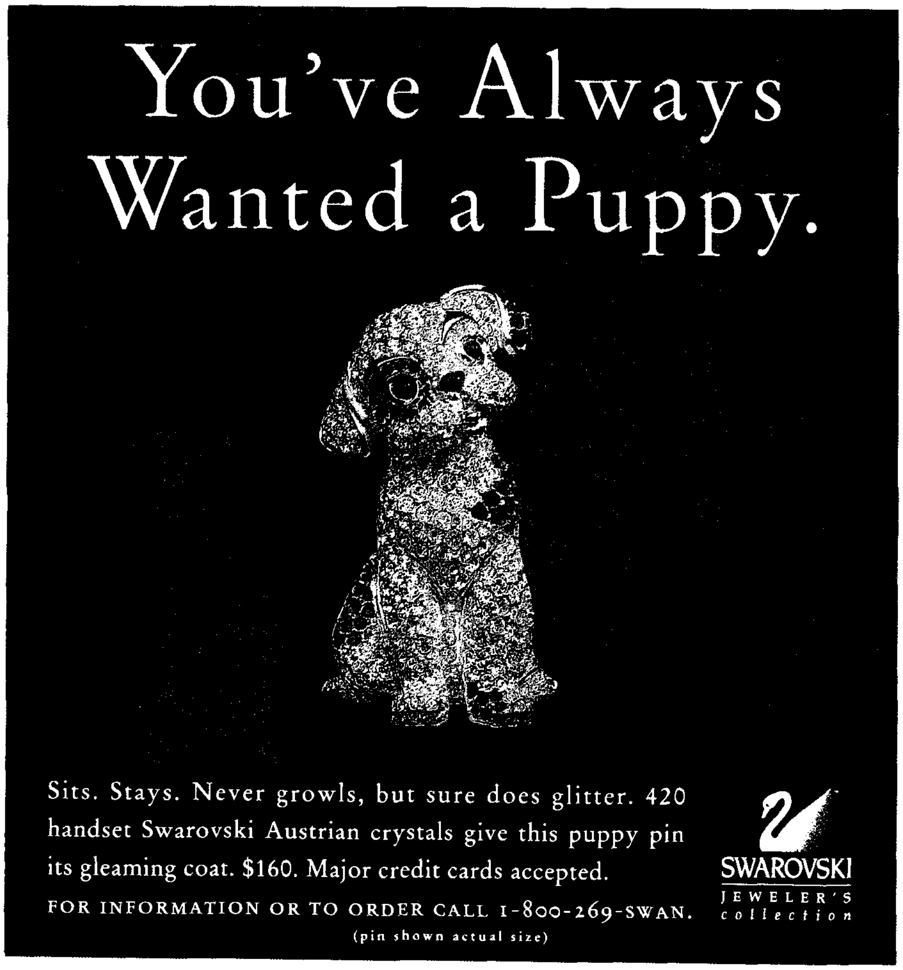
LONG RUNS

BEAU JEST: Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400. . . . **GUYS AND DOLLS:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **NUNSENSE:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. . . . **OLEANNA:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 307-4100. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE SISTERS ROSENSWEIG:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

White Disabled Talent—Greg Walloch got the title for his autobiographical show at an audition for a part on "Sesame Street," when he overheard how he was categorized by an officious secretary. The boyish twenty-three-year-old gay man, who has cerebral palsy, tells a series of stories about various chilling real-life moments, but he delivers the material plainly, with bite and without bombast. Oliver Wadsworth shares the bill. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088. Oct. 30 at 8.)

Krystyna Bobrowski and Judy Dunaway—Ms. Bobrowski presents a new work composed for multiple amplified rocking chairs, and Ms. Dunaway and her Balloon Ensemble offer pieces created for—you guessed it—balloons. A discussion with the performers will follow. (Alternative Museum, 594 Broadway. 966-4444. Oct. 27 at 8.)



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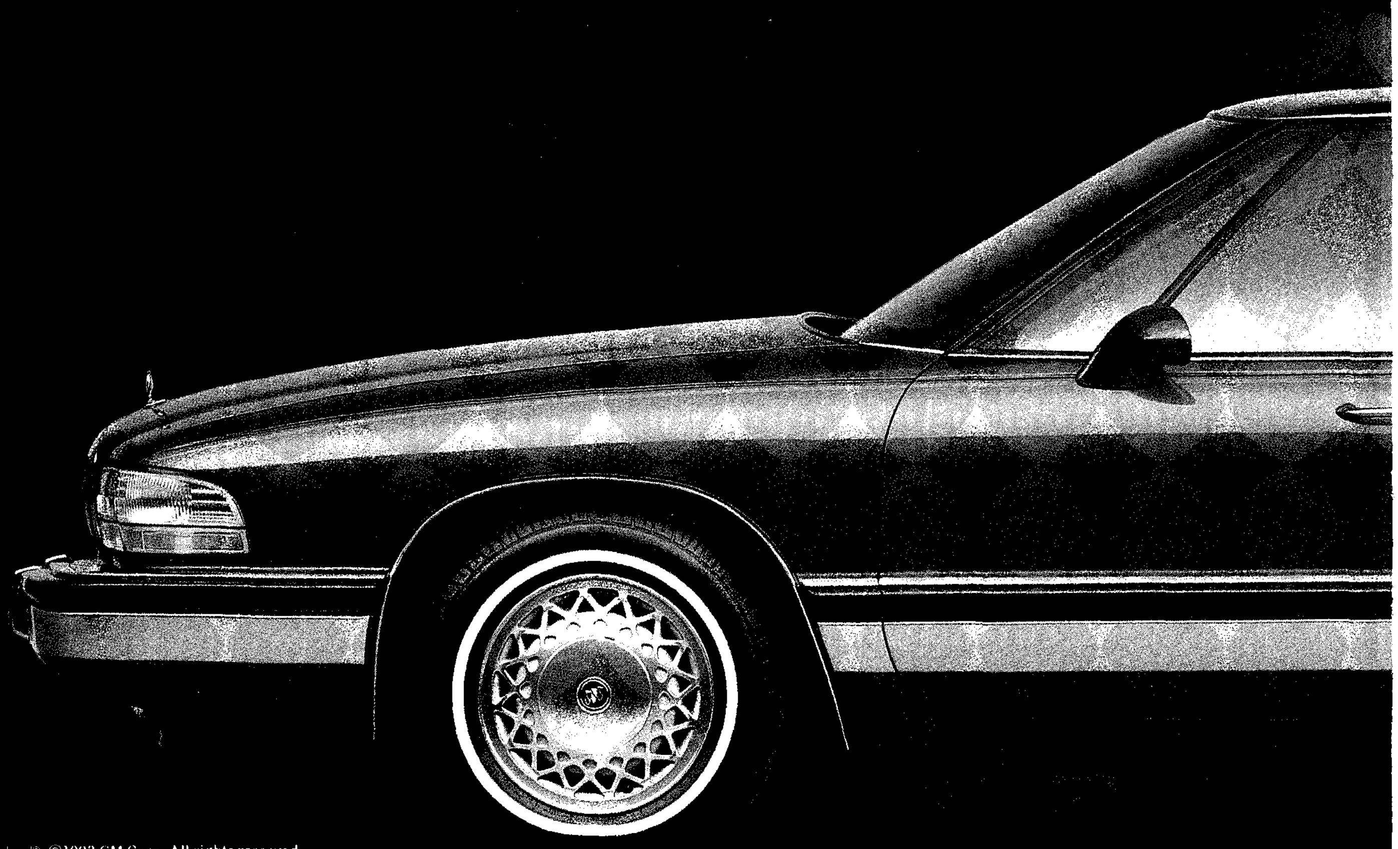

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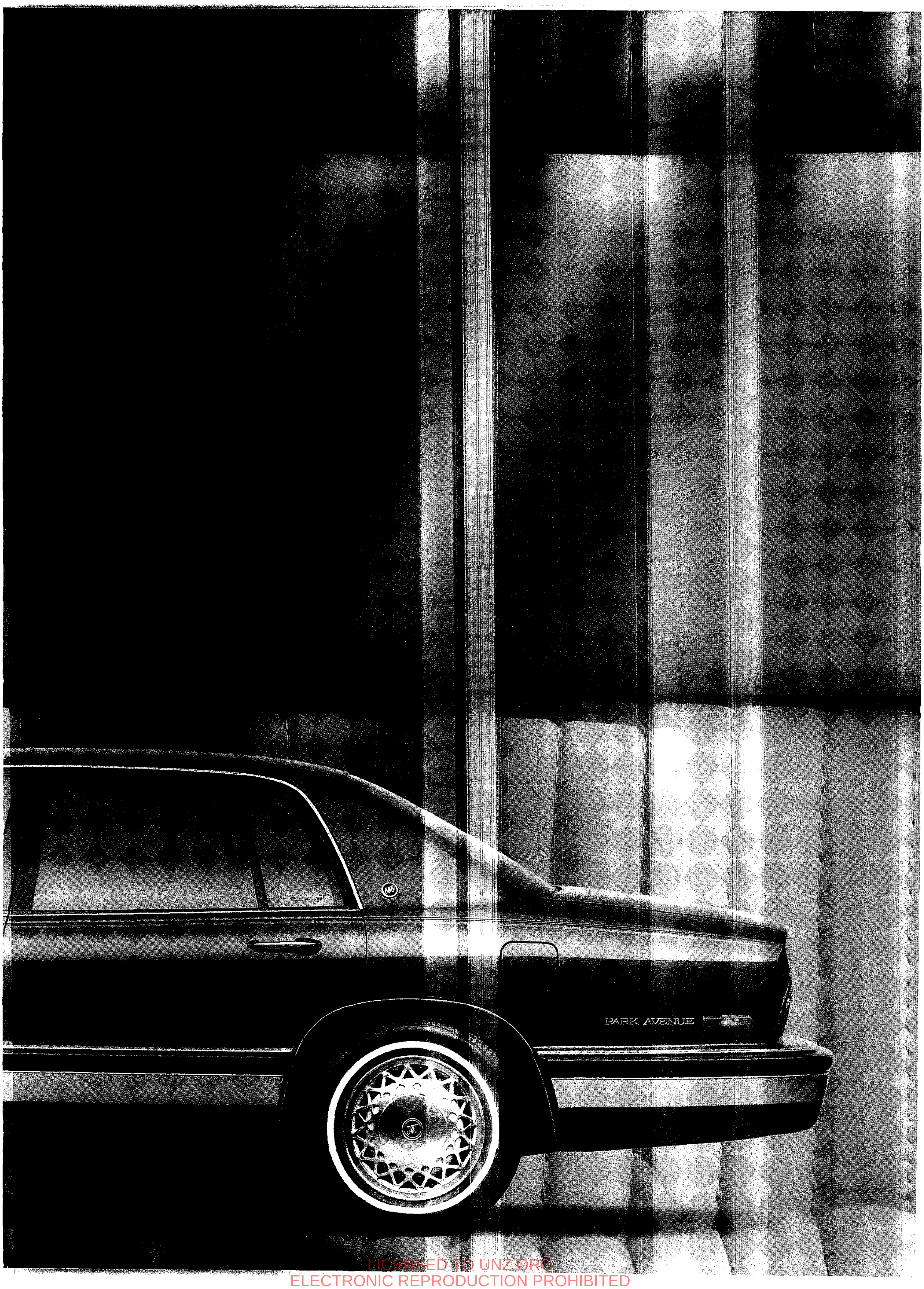
Buckle up, America!


PARK AVENUE

DANCE

Stoned Again

Even though he was not quite finished making his newest dance, Paul Taylor took care the other day to put finishing touches on the parts that were done. The work, "A Field of Grass," is one of two premières that Taylor's company is presenting during its two-week run at City Center. (The other is "Spindrift," set to music by Schoenberg.) "Field" features three men and four women, and although "they are all too young to have been flower children," as Taylor points out, the dancers will embody a number of countercultural rites, to six songs recorded in the late sixties and early seventies by singer-songwriter Harry Nilsson.

Patrick Corbin's solo, set to "Mother Nature's Son," opens the suite. He courses and tumbles around an imaginary field of grass, all the while flaunting a cigarette rolled from a different sort of grass. The choreographer described the closing section, to "The Puppy Song," as "a sort of redemptive display of youthful, harebrained optimism." Taylor seemed nonchalant about the program. "Anybody who takes in the lyrics may be able to relate them to the dance action," he said, "and see, for instance, a spaced-out drug trip, or a rainmaking ritual."

Paul Taylor Dance Company—Oct. 27 at 8, Oct. 30 at 2, and Oct. 31 at 3: "Arden Court," "Snow White," "A Field of Grass" (première), and "Esplanade." . . . ¶ Oct. 28 and Oct. 30 at 8: "Mercuric Tidings," "Spindrift," and "Le Sacre du Printemps (The Rehearsal)." . . . ¶ Oct. 29 at 8, Oct. 31 at 7:30, and Nov. 2 at 8: "Images," "Last Look," and "Company B." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Through Nov. 7.)

Sardono Dance Theatre—An Indonesian company, presenting "Passage Through the Gong" at the Next Wave Festival. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Oct. 28-30 at 8.)

Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company—Final performances of the engagement. Oct. 27 and Oct. 29 at 8: ". . . And the Maiden," "Just You," "Havoc," and "Another History of Collage." . . . ¶ Oct. 28 and Oct. 30 at 8: "How to Walk an Elephant," "Achilles Loved Patroclus," "Shared Distance," and "War Between the States." . . . ¶ Oct. 30 at 2: "Havoc" and "War Between the States" (family matinée program). . . . ¶ Oct. 31 at 2: "There Were So Many. . .," "Achilles Loved Patroclus," "War Between the States," and "Another History of Collage." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

Fred Darsow Dance Company—A nine-member *company, accompanied by two singers and a* guitarist from Spain, in "Cernícalo" (New York première), "Valiente," "Fiesta por Tangos," "Fiesta por Bulerías," and "Soléa por Bulerías." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Oct. 28-30 at 8 and Oct. 31 at 3. Through Nov. 7.)

American Ballroom Theatre—In "The Rainbow Room," "Tango," "The Silver Screen," and a suite of duets. (Sylvia and Danny Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Lexington Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Oct. 28 at 7; Oct. 29-30 at 8; and Oct. 31 at 2.)

Trisler Danscompany—The opening performance in a one-week engagement: "Dancing Through Time," a program spanning seventy-three years of dance. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Nov. 2 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

Dead Reckoning

The Irish-Australian duo Dead Can Dance is attracting a large and growing audience, despite several daunting marketing obstacles. For starters, its name suggests either a Grateful Dead cover band or an ensemble of "morbid goth types," to borrow a phrase from the band's singer, Brendan Perry. Then there's its tendency to forgo familiar pop conventions, in favor of yodelling and Middle Eastern percussion, as well as its fondness for appropriating medieval folk music and birdsong. And then there are the proprietors of menacing downtown boutiques who make the band's sombre, hypnotic music the soundtrack for harrowing shopping experiences. But Perry, who spends his time on an island off Northern Ireland, and his partner, Lisa Gerrard, who lives in the Snow River Mountains in Australia (they exchange tapes through the mail before getting together in the recording studio), would rather have listeners concentrate on the music and leave image to other bands.

Dead Can Dance at Town Hall.

CLARE MELINSKY

Circumstantial evidence to the contrary, Dead Can Dance is an unpretentious and accessible phenomenon. Its new record, "Into the Labyrinth," is rich with evocative grooves, a-cappella chants, bagpipes, plucked zithers, and other exotica, all blended seamlessly with the latest digital technology. Live, Perry says, the band doesn't play much from its records, preferring to improvise, with the support of five additional musicians. In other words, they jam—like that other occasionally misunderstood Dead, from San Francisco.

CONCERTS

Karen Akers—Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Oct. 27 at 8.

Dead Can Dance—Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Oct. 27-28 at 8.

Luther Vandross / En Vogue—This urbane and ultrachic soul extravaganza, featuring plenty of crooning ballads and spunky R. & B., could provide the setting for a great first date or for a rekindled romance. With Lewis Dix. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Oct. 27 and Oct. 29-30 at 8.)

Duran Duran—These aging Euro-pouters have returned from the vale of fashion death on the strength of a surprisingly keen and lively new album. (Are they an early-warning alert for the inevitable eighties revival that is due any day now?) The Cranberries, the Irish quartet that will open the concert, have a charismatic lead singer in Dolores O'Riordan, and a shimmering sound reminiscent of the Sundays and 10,000 Maniacs. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Oct. 27 and Oct. 29 at 8.)

Paul Simon—With Art Garfunkel, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and others. (Paramount, Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Oct. 27, Oct. 29-31, and Nov. 2, all at 8.)

Sainkho Namchylak and Ned Rothenberg—The singer and the instrumentalist/composer in a program called "Tuva Meets the Avant-Garde." (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Oct. 28 at 8.)

Rod Stewart—Madison Square Garden. Oct. 31-Nov. 2 at 8.

Rosemary Clooney—In a tribute to Bing Crosby, with Harry Crosby, Jack Sheldon, the Wiseguys, a big band, and a jazz sextet. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 1 at 8.)

David Sylvian and Robert Fripp—With Michael Brook. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Nov. 2 at 8.)

STANDARDS AND CABARET

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**BONNIE FRANKLIN,** remembered for her role on the seventies TV sitcom "One Day at a Time," continues her singing engagement in the Oak Room. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The pastel uptown spa known as the Café Carlyle is home to Broadway and cabaret legend **BARBARA COOK** and her accompanist, **WALLY HARPER**—but only through Oct. 30. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** presides at the piano.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—On Mondays, Woody Allen continues his night job, as clarinet player in the **NEW ORLEANS FUNERAL AND RAGTIME ORCHESTRA.**

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A moondust-in-your-hair cabaret with plenty of niceties and an amazing view. This week, the singer and actress **LESLIE UGGAMS** continues an engagement. Closed Mondays.

Russian Tea Room, 150 W. 57th St. (265-0947)—Upstairs, there's a small red, gold, and green cabaret. **JULIE WILSON** is here Oct. 28-30, to begin a four-weekend run. **PETER DUCHIN** stops by on Oct. 31. On Nov. 1: actor-director-cabaret veteran **BARRY KLEINBORT** appears with **DONNA MC KECHNIE**, who played Cassie in the original Broadway production of "A Chorus Line." Dining.

JAZZ AND BLUES

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—This pricey club is perpetrating a lot of hoopla this fall as part of its twelfth-anniversary celebration. Through Oct. 31: the sultry alto of **DIANNE REEVES**. Starting Nov. 2: salsa's royal couple, **CELIA CRUZ** and **TITO PUENTE**, with Puente's orchestra. Dining.

BRADLEY'S, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—On any given night, and well into the morning, one or another of New York's many formidable pianists can be found here, shoehorned into a corner with the resplendent Baldwin that Paul Desmond bequeathed to the late Bradley Cunningham. The **CYRUS CHESTNUT** trio appears through Oct. 30. Why does the twentysomething Chestnut stand out from the gaggle of young hot-shot jazz pianists in New York? It's a matter of authenticity: Chestnut's fluency with blues phraseology, his unaffected romanticism, and a splendid touch that never glosses over a battering-ram rhythmic sense. He loves detailed arrangements full of crafty shifts of dynamics just the way his sometime boss, Betty Carter, does. Dining.

FAT TUESDAY'S, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7900)—A softly lit, low-ceilinged, roughly Manhattan-shaped jazz grotto. Through Oct. 31, a stellar trio: organist **JIMMY SMITH**, guitarist **KENNY BURRELL**, and drummer **GRADY TATE** (who is also a fine singer, and is expected to render a ballad or two). A tribute to the late, great Art Blakey begins on Nov. 2, featuring musicians who at one point or another played with Blakey's Jazz Messengers. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL**, the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Dining.

FIVE SPOT, 4 W. 31st St. (631-0100)—Set in a mammoth turn-of-the-century ballroom, the space is all marble and gilt, with a few modern touches, such as the zebra-patterned carpeting in the V.I.P. room upstairs. The singer and pianist **TOM LELLIS** continues through Oct. 28. Dining.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—A busy bar-and-grill in the piano-bass district. The musicians set up in the dining room, a clubby-looking space with leather banquettes and well-preserved collectibles: Sunday *Herald Tribune* covers, First World War posters, Hirschfeld drawings. Up front at the bar, you can keep your eye on the musicians, the conversationalists, and sidewalk life. Through Oct. 30: pianist **HILTON RUIZ** teams up with bassist **ANDREW MC CLOUD III**.

MANNY'S CAR WASH, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—A bright spot on the square-by-definition Upper East Side club scene. Don't expect to be sprayed with soapy water and massaged by large brushes: the fluorescent sign outside is the only car-wash reference. Inside, the place looks like an adman's idea of a blues bar. On Oct. 30, catch **CLARENCE SPADY & THE BLUES STREET ALL-STARS**. On Nov. 1: seventies-style R. & B., with **970-SOUL**.

RED BLAZER TOO, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—It may look like a plain old steak house, and the photos on the walls may look like Sardi's castoffs, but in the back room you'll find swing bands, Dixieland combos, and couples who remember how to dance. Mondays belong to the Smith Street Society jazz band, Tuesdays to Jim Lawyer and his Bluebird orchestra, Thursdays to Stan Rubin's big band, Fridays to Lew Anderson's big band and Terry Waldo & the Gotham City group, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and his Stompers.

RECORD STORE ARRIVALS

A highly selective list of new releases we're curious to hear.

VELVET UNDERGROUND, "Live MCMXCIII" (Sire).

BOB DYLAN, "World Gone Wrong" (Columbia).

JACKSON BROWNE, "I'm Alive" (Elektra).

TRICIA YEARWOOD, "The Song Remembers When" (MCA).

TEVIN CAMPBELL, "I'm Ready" (Qwest).

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—This sleek second cousin to the Village Vanguard deserves credit for a judicious booking policy. The mainstream is always well represented, but so are near-fringe jazz musicians, including some from Europe and Japan. Any club that serves as home base for both Nat Adderley and Steve Lacy is not likely to be pigeonholed. **TERUMASA HINO** checks in through Oct. 31. The **ART FARMER** quintet starts up a two-week run on Nov. 2. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **MILES EVANS** is in action on Mondays. Dining.

TAVERN ON THE GREEN, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—This legendary tourist haven makes serious jazz fans welcome in the Chestnut Room. It resembles a hunting lodge and is every bit as over the top as the rest of the establishment, but the bookings are impressive. The **HANK JONES** trio plays all this week, except Nov. 1. Dining.

TIME CAFÉ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Hidden within this trendy restaurant is a two-story club called Fez. Upstairs is a sumptuous Moroccan bar. The downstairs room, where bands perform, is rather plain in comparison, but still a comfortable spot to take in a show. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** packs them in every Thursday. The fourteen-piece ensemble concentrates exclusively on the tricky, cacophonous work of its catalyst, Charles Mingus. Dining.

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Low lighting, muraled pillars, ironwork, a beautifully restored stamped-tin ceiling, and very little elbow room. Zydeco, soul, blues, and rock are the main orders of business here. On Oct. 29-30: the **METERS**, with guests the **DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND**. Now that funk historicism is all the rage, it's a good time to praise the mighty Meters. As the New Orleans counterpart of Memphis's Booker T. and the MGs, the Meters were the backbone of the city's soul sound; their hits define funk at its leanest and toughest. The Dirty Dozen Brass Band are Crescent City revisionists; they put the stomp into everything they play, from Stevie Wonder to Jelly Roll Morton. **ETTA JAMES** drops by for a few days beginning Nov. 2. Dining.

VILLAGE GATE, 160 Bleecker St. (475-5120)—Located on a beery strip of the Village where every day is spring break, this club offers three floors of fun. In the Terrace Bar, **BOB DOROUGH** and **BILL TAKAS** continue through Oct. 31. An Arkansas native, singer-pianist Dorough is perhaps best known for his songwriting credits, which range from Al Jarreau recordings to educational children's TV. (Remember "Multiplication Rock"?) Bassist Takas has been his cohort for two decades.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The world's most famous jazz club is also the last place in town that still looks, feels, and smells like a classic jazz club—subterranean, smoky, and thick with the spirits of past masters. The **GEORGE COLEMAN** quartet is here through Oct. 31. The **ANDREW HILL** quartet starts up on Nov. 2. Mondays are reserved for the **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA**.

VISIONES, 125 Macdougal St., at 3rd St. (673-5576)—A tiny, low-key supper club where the jazz, like the Spanish-American cuisine, can take on a spicy, multicultural flavor. Through Oct. 30: the **CECIL BROOKS III ALL-STARS**. With little recognition (and no fanfare), Brooks has developed into an incisive modern drummer and a thoughtful composer. He also knows how to put a band

THE BOFFINS BAFFLED

What chemistry, we are often asked, takes place in the succulent bosom of the sherry casks where The Macallan lies slumbering for a decade (at least) before it is allowed out to meet the bottle?

The fact is, we do not know.

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But let us take our cue from a party of scientists whom we once invited to explore the matter. '*Magic!*' they exclaimed, swigging their drams in a most unboffinly manner. 'But magic is merely undiscovered science and we'd like to take some home *for further investigation.*'

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NIGHT LIFE—Cont'd

together. His front line features Jack Walrath, a quirky, eclectic trumpeter best known for his tenure with Charles Mingus, and tenor saxophonist Don Braden, a young classicist whose firm choruses are beginning to turn heads with regularity.

ROCK AND FOLK

Academy, 234 W. 43rd St.—In the heart of the theatre district, a haven for those whose musical tastes run left of "Tommy." **MATTHEW SWEET** stops by on Oct. 29. Sweet's new album, "Altered Beast," isn't quite the box of folk-rock candy that his 1991 release, "Girlfriend," was, but his new rawness is an intriguing development. When he hits the bull's-eye, as he does with a great song like "Someone to Pull the Trigger," this rocker can make the hair on the back of your neck stand up. Hollyfaith will open. For concert information, call 249-8870.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A sleek, green-walled room with brass railings. Be sure to check out the adjoining restaurant/tapas bar, which looks like the indoor food market of your dreams. The wonderful country crooner **JIMMIE DALE GILMORE** continues through Oct. 28. Gilmore grew up in Lubbock, where he soaked up just about every pure-blooded sound a West Texas boy can hear. The forty-eight-year-old singer's fifth album, "Spinning Around the Sun," is a high, lonesome masterwork that lives and breathes country-music history. Closed Mondays.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—This big, airy folk-and-rock club used to be the site of a lot of music-industry bashes, but now it's an eclectic and hard-to-figure-out venue for the good, the bad, and (sometimes still) the great. **DARDEN SMITH** is here on Oct. 29. **ZACHARY RICHARD** performs on Oct. 30. On his most recent album, "Snake Bite Love," Richard proves himself a master of Louisiana-inflected pop, and a fine songwriter.

Café Sin-é, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—A small peach-walled storefront, Sin-é is usually given over to a young, earthy crowd that drinks Rolling Rock or espresso and waits for some Irish musician or other to blow in and play a set. On Oct. 28: **THE FAT LADY SINGS.** Here's a chance to catch the Irish band's buoyant, folk-flavored pop without paying a cover charge. The **BLUE THUMBS** arrive on Oct. 29 with similarly spirited rock.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—This two-floor establishment has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. Physically, the place is sagging a bit, but that's part of its appeal. The **VIOLENT FEMMES** stop by on Oct. 28. A spare post-punk guitar trio, the Femmes have survived several rough patches since their powerful début album of acoustic love-hate songs ten years ago. The late eighties saw singer-guitarist Gordon Gano, bassist Brian Ritchie, and drummer Victor DeLorenzo all shuttling back and forth between the Femmes and solo projects. DeLorenzo recently left the group for good, and has been replaced by Guy Hoffman, formerly of the BoDeans, who will appear with the band on its next studio album. (In the meantime, fans can check out their new compilation, "Added Up: 1981-1993.") . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday night, at the Continental Club. The dancers all share a passion for the Lindy Hop, a dance that involves a lot of whirling and the occasional display of underwear. Sets from eight until midnight. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

Lone Star Roadhouse, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—A two-tiered honky-tonk that looks as if it could have been the inspiration for the Hard Rock Café. (It wasn't, of course; money was.) Upstairs, there's a display of vintage Gibson guitars. Downstairs, in the dining room, there's a stage, a dance floor, and caricatures of musicians who have blown through over the years. **JERRY JEFF WALKER** will be here on Oct. 28. Dining.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—The bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. The noisy and not particularly erotic band **COME** performs on Oct. 28, with the Laughing Hyenas opening. The band **THROWING MUSES** is in on Nov. 2.

Sounds of Brazil, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—The closest thing in Manhattan to a rain forest, this venerable club has many selling points: tropical drinks, Brazilian food, faux palm trees, a thatch-roofed bar. The live music is primarily from Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean, and the dance floor is usually hopping. Dining. Through Oct. 28: singer-percussionist **VINX,** and **CASSANDRA WILSON.** The newly released "The Storyteller," Vinx's third album, is even quirkier and more eclectic than its predecessors were, setting the singer's mellifluous baritone against a lush backdrop that incorporates elements of jazz, salsa, and flamenco. A guest star on the album is jazz diva Wilson, whose own idiosyncratic style draws heavily on funk and rap influences. Look for a duet or two during this double bill. Closed Sundays. Dining.

R.O. BLECHMAN

Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway (966-9520)—A sometime gallery space with an ahead-of-the-curve booking policy. On Oct. 31: griot **FODE KOUYATE** and his band. On Nov. 2-3: Algerian vocalist **HOURIA AÏCHI** and flutist **SAÏD NISSIA.**

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Home to an endless Summer of Love. Wetlands is a groovy, psychedelic, thoroughly Green night club. It is filled more or less nightly with young bands who like to play long, swirling jams and with throngs of young Deadheads who like to listen to them. A group of seventies-pop-culture satirists, **DREAD ZEPPELIN** holds forth on Oct. 31. As its name suggests, Dread Zeppelin delivers Led Zeppelin covers with a reggae accent. The twist within a twist is that the band's lead singer is a tongue-in-cheek Elvis impersonator.

Photo: Minh Nguyen

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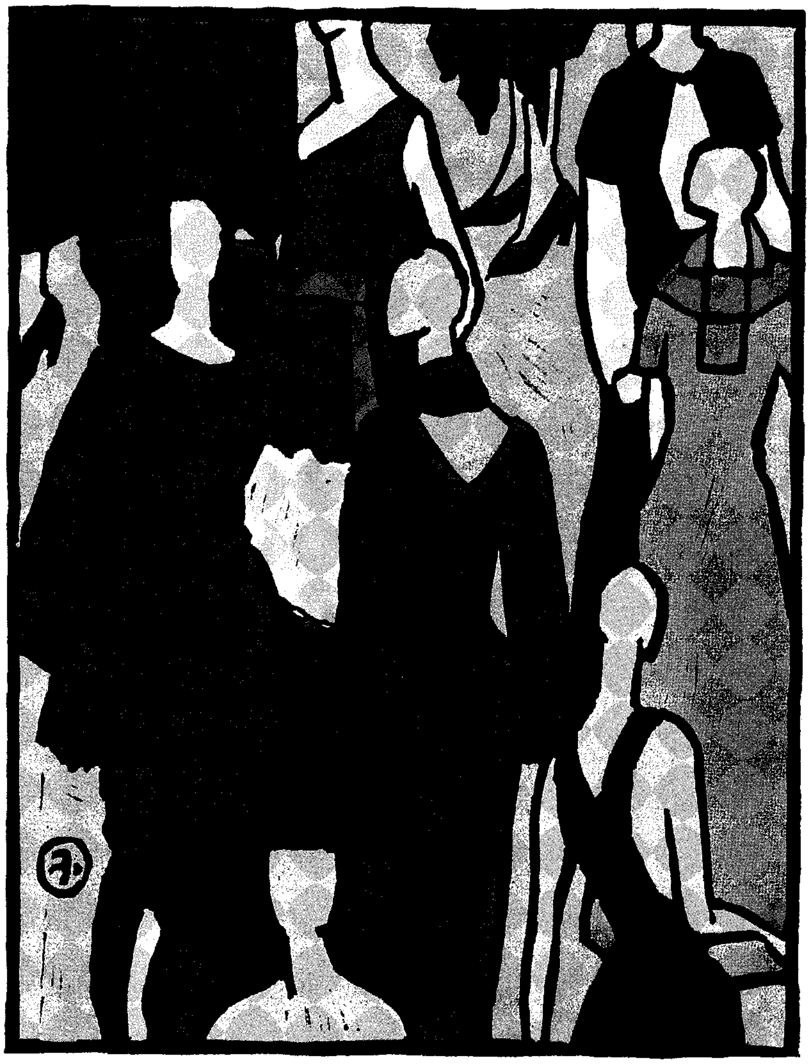
ART

New Bohemians

THOSE not already familiar with Hugh Steers' work should hasten to his current show of recent paintings and oil sketches (Richard Anderson, 476 Broome Street; through November 13). Because his gallery's previous venue, a storefront on Thompson Street, was so tiny, no more than a couple of Steers' full-scale paintings could be shown together before. Now, in more spacious new quarters, there are six, along with ten small sketches. It's a chance to see a sizable cache of Steers' murky, ethereal pictures, many of which describe a *nouvelle bohème* of club performers and downtown artistes, of East Village tenements in which boys rather than girls play Mimì.

As before, these are traditional works—genre scenes, in fact, with a depressed, thirties feel. They are suffused with poetic atmosphere and low-intensity theatrical effects of light and shadow, and they invite comparisons to such notable chroniclers of poignant domesticity and soulful debauchery as Walter Sickert, Reginald Marsh, and Edward Hopper. Steers' technique is good, if not transcendent, but it is his allegorical imagination—grander now, and more stoically joined to his tragic themes—that makes his work so satisfying. The grandest painting in this show is "Urinals," in which the figure of a sailor lies inert on a public-lavatory floor. It is an elegy to Allen Schindler, the gay sailor who was beaten to death last year by a hostile Navy shipmate. In the theatrical solemnity of the space depicted, and in the haunting angle of the body, we also find a surprisingly powerful homage to Manet's great "Dead Toreador."



"Versailles 1973" at the Met.

FRANÇOIS BERTHOUD

MUSEUMS

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Versailles 1973: American Fashion on the World Stage." In the world of fashion, 1973 is the year America finally conquered European snobbery. This occurred, according to "Versailles 1973," when five American designers (Bill Blass, Stephen Burrows, Halston, Anne Klein, and Oscar de la Renta) were invited to show their work alongside that of five of their French contemporaries, at the Palace of Versailles. The Americans stole the show with their innovative sportswear and "comfortable clothing for modern living." Twenty years later, the museum's New Costume Institute has re-created this historical moment. . . . ¶ "Abstract Expressionism: Works on Paper, Selections from the Collection" begins with work from the mid-thirties and early forties, and concludes with several eclectic pieces from the mid-sixties. Through Nov. 7. . . . ¶ The museum's new Nineteenth-Century European Painting and Sculpture galleries are now open, featuring, among other works, van Gogh's "Wheat Field with Cypresses" (1889). . . . ¶ "Elephant: The Animal and Its Ivory in African Art" includes seventy objects, from elephant masks to intricately carved tusks, representing more than twenty different indigenous cultures. . . . ¶ Twenty years of Hudson River School works on paper. . . . ¶ "Nineteenth-Century Portraits, Landscapes, and Nudes." (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—Last year's Matisse extravaganza may have been an impossible act to follow, but the current Miró retrospective—celebrating the centennial of the Catalan master with some four hundred paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, and ceramics—is trying. Perhaps the most powerful interlude in the show is the series of twenty-three paintings known as "The Constellations" (1940-41). Works of dazzling complexity and innovation, they were begun in the seeming tranquillity of Miró's adopted home in Varengeville, France, and completed in Palma de Mallorca only after the artist and his family had made a harrowing retreat from the German advance. . . . ¶ An exhibition of the work of Robert Ryman, who is best known for his elegant, entirely white paintings. . . . ¶ "New Photography Nine" showcases four contemporary photographers whose work ranges from portraits of children in Knoxville, Tennessee, to images of squalor in Ukraine. . . . ¶ Paintings and assemblages by Moira Dryer (1957-92). Through Nov. 16. . . . ¶ "Marco Zanuso and Richard Sapper: Selections from the Design Collection." Twenty objects, including televisions, appliances, and chairs, designed between 1959 and 1978. Through Nov. 9. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—A 1961 oil on canvas of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck sets the stage for four decades' worth of Roy Lichtenstein's Pop appropriations. The comprehensive exhibition (a hundred and twenty paintings) proceeds through a black-and-white period, past several Mondrian- and Picasso-like digressions and a few late works with sections deliberately blurred (as if to suggest stylistic transition or ennui), and culminates in a new large-scale series, titled "Interiors." These new works depict painted rooms populated with, among other images, reproductions of Lichtenstein's own earlier work. Outdoors, a seventeen-foot green-and-yellow sculpture called "Brushstroke" dominates Fifth Avenue, like an overgrown Benday dot. (Open daily, except Thursdays, 10 to 8; Closes Mondays at 6.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway—Paintings, watercolors, drawings, and prints by Paul Klee (1879-1940). Through Nov. 5. . . . ¶ "Singular Dimensions in Painting," an exhibit of minimalist work, primarily from the fifties and sixties. Through Nov. 15. . . . ¶ "Virtual Reality: An Emerging Medium" presents five computerized "worlds" designed by Jenny Holzer, Thomas Dolby, and others. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday through Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—A small but beautiful show of Arshile Gorky's "Betrothals," three important late canvases, and related studies. Gorky (1904-48) was a bridge figure in the history of modern art: stretching between Europe and America, Surrealism and abstraction, he was a significant precursor of Abstract Expressionism. He achieved his mature style only in late works like the "Betrothals," painted shortly before his suicide, in 1948. The intricate formal play of drawing and painting in these works sustains a mood of inwardness and loss. . . . ¶ Paintings by Vija Celmins. Through Nov. 28. . . . ¶ "The Cave," a video installation by Beryl Korot, with music by Steve Reich. Through Nov. 28. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—Two exhibitions that focus on lesser-known locales and conditions in Cuba and Antarctica via photographs, drawings, biological specimens, and dioramas. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont St.—One corner of the main floor is now given over to "AIDS/Brooklyn," a look at the virus's impact on Kings County. (Nearly eight thousand Brooklyn residents have succumbed to AIDS.) Personal possessions and recorded conversations testify to the essential ordinariness of the victims, but a peculiar New York tension also emerges: Brooklyn may offer more in the way of supportive family communities, but the afflicted often seek medical treatment in Manhattan, with its superior facilities and blessed personal anonymity. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 5.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—More than sixty examples of eighteenth-century monochrome, blue-and-white, and polychrome porcelains. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 7.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—The library celebrates the birthdays of two classics—Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's "The Little Prince" (1943) and Beatrix Potter's "Peter Rabbit" (1893)—with early manuscripts, photographs, illustrations, and other memorabilia. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"The Dead Sea Scrolls: Ancient Civilization / Modern Scholarship." Twelve Scrolls are on display, along with related artifacts, models, and maps, on loan from the Israel Antiquities Authority. . . . ¶ Letters, photographs, portraits, and memorabilia related to Virginia Woolf and other Bloomsbury writers. . . . ¶ An exhibition of Polish materials relating to history, literature, the arts, and folklore. (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Mondays and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadow Park—"Across the Pacific: Contemporary Korean and Korean-American Art" includes painting, sculpture, and works on paper by more than thirty artists. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. The following listings lead off with shows opening this week.)

Robert Crumb / H. R. Giger—A retrospective of Crumb's work, along with rarely seen images from his personal correspondence and sketchbooks. / Seventeen paintings and five drawings, as well as specially designed furniture and engraved stainless-steel floor tiles by this Swiss artist, best known for his design work on the film "Alien" and for his horrifying, futuristic biomechanical imagery. Opens Nov. 1. Through Dec. 23. (Alexander, 980 Madison Ave., at 77th St.)

Lawrence Gipe—Paintings based on photographs of Bavarian landscapes of the thirties and forties. Opens Oct. 27. Through Nov. 27. (Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St.)

Philip Smith—Paintings involving a complicated technique and personal iconography. Opens Nov. 2. Through Dec. 11. (McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

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Jackson Pollock (1912-56)—Pollock's reputation rests as much on the legend of his tumultuous life as it does on the revolutionary drip paintings of the late nineteen-forties. The Pollock myth has congealed around clichés of the wild-man artist brimming with existential angst and primal energies. (At least three film biographies of Pollock are in the works, including one that may feature Barbra Streisand in the role of Lee Krasner.) Meanwhile, this modest show of drip paintings from 1948 and 1949 is a fine exposition of the artist's extraordinary control over the dynamics of gesture. Two works from 1948 clarify the evolution of Pollock's overall style: with its sparse and nervous squiggles, "Number 22A" preserves the rudiments of figuration and traditional composition, whereas "Number 14" dissolves them in loops of thickening and thinning enamel paint. Through Dec. 11. (C & M, 45 E. 78th St. Closed Tuesdays.)

Alexander Archipenko (1887-1964)—Works in bronze, wood, terra-cotta, and Plexiglas. Through Nov. 13. (Adler, 41 E. 57th St.)

Robert Arneson (1930-92)—A memorial exhibition of paintings and sculptures from the past twenty years, including a 1972 self-portrait, a bronze portrait of Jackson Pollock, and the centerpiece of the show, "Guardians of the Secret II," Arneson's last major work. Through Nov. 16. (Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St.)

Tony Bennett—Best known for his work on revolving disks, the artist signs his full name, Anthony Benedetto, to his paintings and lithographs. Through Oct. 30. (Elysium, 28 E. 78th St.)

Fernando Botero—Sculpture and drawings on canvas. Through Nov. 6. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.) . . . **Note:** Botero's corpulent bronze figures can be seen on the Park Avenue Mall from 54th to 61st Sts. Through Nov. 14.

Fritz Bultman (1919-85)—Abstract Expressionist drawings from the years 1958 to 1961 by one of the Irascibles, a group that included Pollock, Kline, and Motherwell. Through Nov. 23. (Schlesinger, 24 E. 73rd St.)

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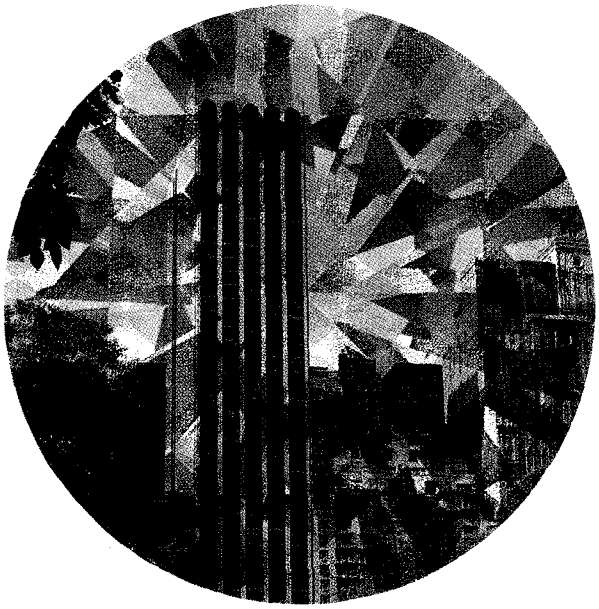

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ART–Cont'd

Willem de Kooning—Drawings from throughout the artist's career. Through Dec. 31. (Mathes, 41 E. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Jim Dine—"Ape & Cat" is a group of new bronze-and-wood sculptures, accompanied by several drawings on plywood, in charcoal, pastel, enamel, and shellac. Through Nov. 27. (Pace, 32 E. 57th St.)

Oyvind Fahlström (1928-76)—An installation titled "The Garden (A World Model)" (1973), a model for his large sculpture "The Meatball Curtain" (1970), plus "Notes"—drawings that form the basis for larger works. Through Nov. 6. (Janis, 110 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Jared French (1905-88) / **Debra Bermingham**—Drawings from the sixties. / New paintings and drawings. Both through Nov. 13. (Midtown-Payson, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Edward Hopper (1882-1967)—A mini-retrospective of paintings spanning five decades. Through Nov. 13. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.)

David Levine and Aaron Shikler—A joint exhibition of figure paintings in celebration of the nearly fifty-year friendship of the two artists. Through Nov. 6. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.; and Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St.)

Loren MacIver—A wide-ranging exhibition of paintings and collages, from the artist's early Surrealist work of the thirties through her recent depictions of New York. Through Nov. 6. (Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St.)

Boris Margo—An exhibition of work from 1932 to 1952 revealing this Russian painter's evolution from Surrealism to abstraction. Through Nov. 13. (Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St.)

Joan Nelson—Landscapes on wood panels, combining contemporary scenes with references to Old Masters. Through Nov. 20. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

Jeffrey Schiff—New sculptural work. Through Nov. 3. (Sculpture Center, 167 E. 69th St.)

Donald Sultan—New paintings. Through Nov. 4. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St.)

Wayne Thiebaud—A retrospective of watercolors, drawings, and prints from 1964 to the present, including some preparatory studies from the artist's own collection. Through Nov. 27. (Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St.)

"Art and Politics in Weimar Germany"—An excellent survey of the politically motivated art produced between the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II, in 1918, and the National Socialist coup d'état, in 1933. The show includes some thirty artists, among them John Heartfield, Käthe Kollwitz, and Otto Dix, and encompasses the prevailing tendencies of the time: Expressionism, Dada, and Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity). Through Nov. 6. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St.)

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"Miró and New York"—A show of paintings, sculptures, and works on paper by artists who were influenced by Miró's New York exhibitions in the thirties and forties, among them Ilya Bolotowsky, Arshile Gorky, and David Hare. Through Nov. 27. (Washburn, 20 W. 57th St.) . . . ¶ Miró paintings and works on paper from 1927 to 1951. Through Nov. 24. (Cohen, 1018 Madison Avenue at 78th St.)

DOWNTOWN

Robert Longo—Large-scale charcoal-and-graphite drawings of handguns, plus a single sculpture made of twenty thousand bullets. Opens Oct. 30. Through Nov. 27. (Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St.)

Willie Young—Finely detailed drawings of abstract root forms. Opens Oct. 30. Through Dec. 4. (Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St.)

"The Uses of Geometry—Then and Now"—American abstract artists of the thirties and forties, including Burgoyne Diller, Charles Biederman, and Josef Albers. Opens Oct. 29. Through Dec. 4. (Snyder, 588 Broadway.)

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Erika Rothenberg and Tracy Tynan—"Suicide Notes" is a morbid but fascinating installation, which, according to the artists, "consists of suicide notes from an anonymous L.A.P.D. source." They go on to explain that "the names and handwritings have been changed, but the texts have not been altered *in any way.*" Tynan and Rothenberg have mounted these grisly epistles on black vinyl body bags bearing information on each dead person's age, sex, and method of suicide. The men tend to prefer guns; the women, pills. The notes themselves are variously desperate, pathetic, mean-spirited, tender, and oddly technical. One particularly wrenching note, from an impoverished elderly woman who jumped to her death, ends, "To the Lord no hard feelings." Through Nov. 13. (P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway.)

Ashley Bickerton—Sculptures made of natural objects, such as stones and coconuts. Through Nov. 6. (Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway.)

Alexander Calder (1898-1976)—Two monumental sculptures: a mobile from 1957 and a stabile from 1964, neither exhibited in New York before. Through Oct. 30. (Gagosian, 136 Wooster St.)

Chuck Close—A new group of his trademark portraits of contemporary artists. Through Nov. 27. (Pace, 142 Greene St.)

Steve DiBenedetto—Paintings combining traditional imagery with imagery that appears to have been computer-generated. Through Nov. 13. (Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St.)

Carroll Dunham—New drawings, including "Inverted Chartreuse," in which an unbroken horizon connects a sequence of ten shapes. Through Nov. 13. (Nolan-Eckman, 560 Broadway.)

Christian Garnett—Veils of paint which were incised while wet to expose the underlying surface. Though Nov. 17. (Auchincloss, 558 Broadway.)

Ann Hamilton—A site-specific installation involving horsehair, scorched paper, and a tape-recorded voice. (Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

Joseph Kosuth—A two-room installation incorporating work previously seen at the Venice Biennale. Through Nov. 6. (Castelli, 420 West Broadway.)

Penny Kronengold—Paintings and small terra-cotta and wax sculptures of figures struggling to break out of an enclosed space or a formless mass. Through Nov. 6. (First Street Gallery, 560 Broadway.)

Robert Kushner—Large-scale paintings with floral motifs, in which the paint surface is embellished with gold, silver, and copper leaf and bronzing powder. Through Nov. 20. (Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St.)

Sean Landers—New green-glazed terra-cotta sculptures of leprechauns, among other works. Through Nov. 27. (Rosen, 130 Prince St.)

Glenn Ligon—New large black-and-white paintings that incorporate James Brown lyrics and Richard Pryor jokes. Through Nov. 20. (Protetch, 560 Broadway.)

Norman Lewis (1909-79)—Drawings from 1945 to 1960 that reveal an affinity with jazz. Through Jan. 15. (Daferner, 568 Broadway.)

Joan Miró (1893-1983)—Gouaches, prints, a painting on wood, letters, and rare photographs. Through Nov. 13. (Prats, 568 Broadway.)

Reinhard Mucha—A survey of work from the past ten years: large vitrines and sculptures in various mediums, showing a concern with memory and personal history (symbolic reconstructions of train stations are recurrent). Through Nov. 20. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St.)

Ross Neher—Atmospheric abstract paintings that achieve their effect with subtle shifts of color and light. Through Nov. 13. (Beitzel, 102 Prince St.)

Ellen Phelan—A dozen paintings, in oil on linen, of dolls' faces. Using her familiar modus operandi, the artist made these works only after completing a corresponding series in gouache and watercolors (on view in December). Through Nov. 27. (Toll, 146 Greene St.)

Deborah Rosenthal—Recent paintings and vivid pastels, many of which are inspired by Byzantine or Romanesque motifs. Through Nov. 3. (Bowery, 121 Wooster St. Open Sundays.)

Tony Scherman—Paintings based on the story of the rape of Callisto from Ovid's Metamorphoses. Through Nov. 13. (Stux, 163 Mercer St.)

Lydia Schouten—Installation works on paper. Through Nov. 20. (Saul, 560 Broadway.)

Mark Tansey—Recent drawings and selected paintings. Through Dec. 4. (Marcus, 578 Broadway.)

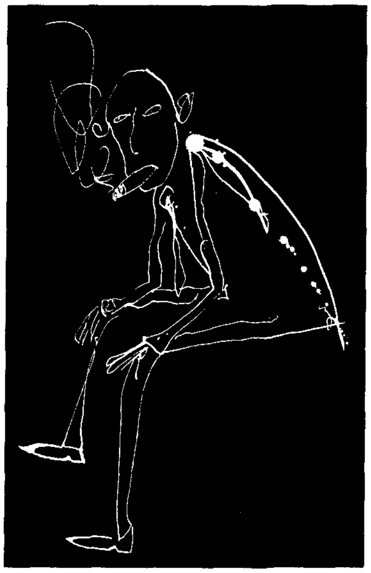
Gunter Umberg—New monochromatic paintings and works on paper. Through Nov. 13. (Stark, 594 Broadway.)

John Wilcox—New abstract paintings that incorporate Biblical texts. Through Nov. 13. (Fawbush, 76 Grand St.)

"Comic Power"—Selections from the work of ninety-five artists whose style is directly or indirectly derived from comic strips, underground comics, graffiti, and other demotic forms of visual narrative, from the "head comix" of Gilbert Shelton and R. Crumb to recent productions by first-rate artists like Leslie Sternbergh and Carol Lay. Through Oct. 30. (Exit Art, 548 Broadway.)

"Ha-Cha-Cha!"—A group show of pinup and glamour art from *Playboy*, *Esquire*, and other magazines, along with works by contemporary artists inspired by the cheesecake muse. Through Nov. 13. (Cutler, 379 West Broadway.)

"Putt-Modernism"—An entertaining and provocative eighteen-hole miniature-golf course, refurbished since its showing last summer, in which each hole was designed by a different artist. You can rent a putter for five bucks, or just look for free. Through Feb. 27. (Fulton Market Building, South Street Seaport, Pier 16, East River at Fulton St. The course is open Thursdays through Saturdays, from noon to midnight, and Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Sundays, from noon to 10.)



LIZZIE HOLLEY

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Christie's East—Comic collectibles are serious business. Witness the upcoming sale of classic, contemporary, and strip art, in which some of the top lots are Frank Frazetta's original oil "Princess of Mars" (estimate: $80,000-$120,000); the original art for the "Clash of the Titans" movie poster, by the Brothers Hildebrandt (estimate: $15,000-$20,000); and Alex Raymond's matched pair "Flash Gordon/Jungle Jim" (estimate: $18,000-$22,000). (219 E. 67th St. Oct. 30 at 11. For information, call 606-0400.)

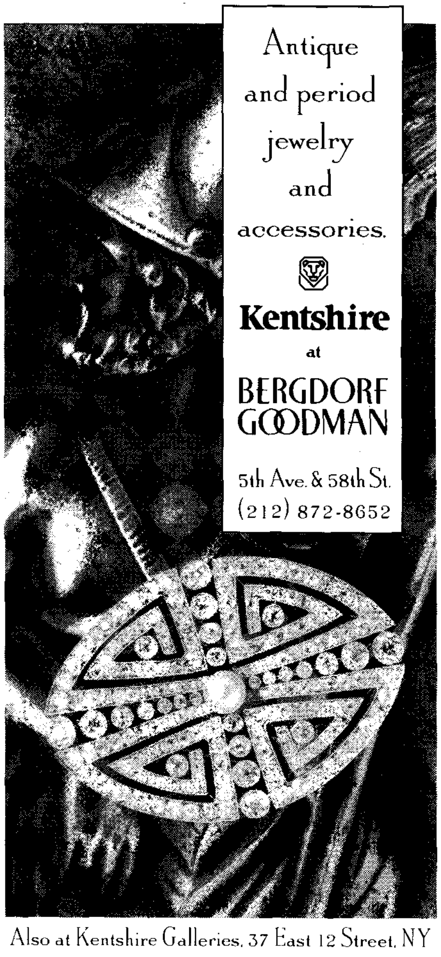
International Vintage Poster Fair—Some twelve thousand posters from twenty-two American and European dealers, including Belle Époque posters by Jules Cheret (the exuberant turn-of-the-century French women he painted became known as Cherets) and American circus posters of the eighteen-nineties, printed by Strobridge Lithographers. Hipsters are likely to go for posters from sixties and early-seventies rock concerts at the Avalon Ballroom and Fillmore West. You can spend fifty dollars, or you can spend seventy-five thousand dollars. (St. Moritz Hotel, 50 Central Park S. Oct. 30, from 11 to 7, and Oct. 31, from 11 to 6. For information, call 206-0499.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Smoke Gets in Your Eyes

On a recent Saturday, Barbara Jakobson, the co-organizer of the current exhibition at Knoedler (19 East 70th Street), was not smoking. "You do a show of photographs of people smoking, but you can't smoke in the gallery," she said, relishing the irony. "It's better than going to Canyon Ranch." The exhibition, which Jakobson put together with Keith de Lellis, a private dealer, is called "Up in Smoke," and it's up through November 4. It's a wonderfully broad show, both intelligent and sophisticated.

The eighty or so pictures in the show span the century, and the photographers featured include Erwin Blumenfeld, Louise Dahl-Wolfe, and Man Ray. There are also surprises, like Frank Stella's mesmerizing images of smoke, produced as part of his preparations for his latest sculpture. There are classic portraits of the famous, along with photographs that remind one of how for decades smoking was associated with glamour and good health. Aside from the rich social iconography, "Up in Smoke" is really about great pictures, including many by relatively unknown photographers. Bruce Gilden's "Lefty Louie" (1984), for instance, which depicts a jaunty boulevardier, is as fine a character study as one could find. Smoking was not necessarily the intended subject of many of these



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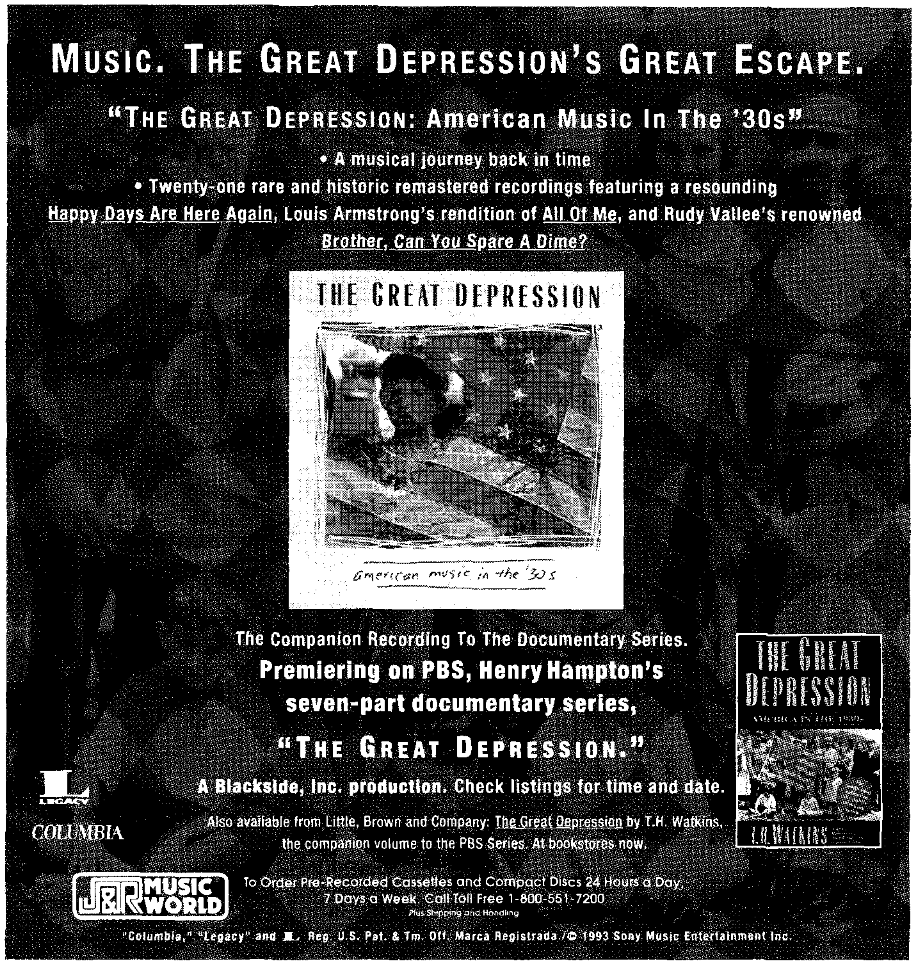

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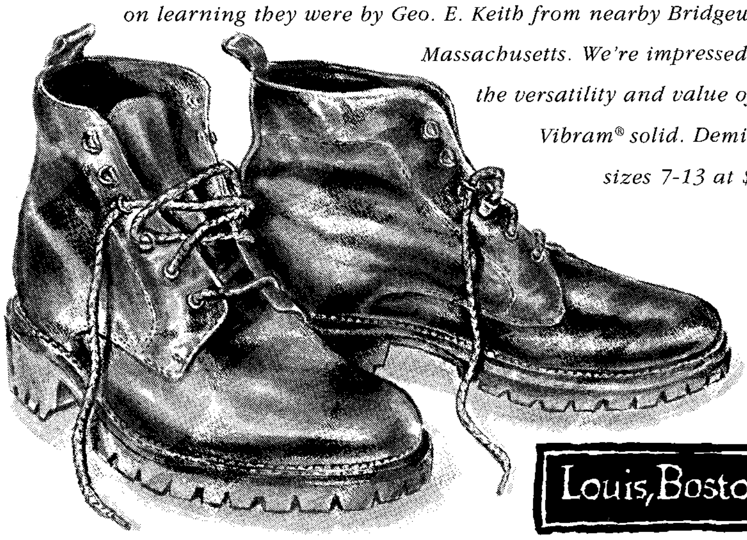

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PHOTOGRAPHY—Cont'd

works, but the theme allowed the organizers to bring together images that wouldn't otherwise have rubbed against each other. Jakobson, for her part, has an easy explanation for the show: "It just shows you what cigarettes can do for a photograph."

JO ANN CALLIS—Large-scale color prints of objects draped in opulent fabrics. Through Nov. 6. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St.)

PETER CAMPUS—Computer-altered color photographs. Through Nov. 12. (Cooper, 155 Wooster St.)

HARRY CALLAHAN—Photographs of the artist's family taken in the thirties and forties. Through Nov. 22. (Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St.)

EUGÈNE DRUET (1868-1917)—Vintage prints of Rodin sculptures. Through Oct. 30. (Sander, 19 East 76th St.)

WILLIAM EGGLESTON—Recent work. Through Nov. 20. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

LEWIS W. HINE (1874-1940)—Hine is best known for his harsh realist photography, particularly his work documenting Ellis Island, child labor, and industrial squalor. Through Nov. 13. (Mann, 42 E. 76th St.)

GRACIELA ITURBIDE—Seventy photographs of life in rural Mexico. Through Dec. 4. (Witkin, 415 West Broadway.)

ROXANNE LOWIT—"Moments," a series of black-and-white photographs that capture the late seventies and early eighties in all their glory, from rich and glamorous types dancing at Studio 54 and Area to portraits of celebrities forever associated with the period, like Andy Warhol and Divine. Opens Oct. 29. Through Nov. 27. (Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway.)

GEORGE PLATT LYNES (1907-55)—A first-rate exhibition of vintage photographs from the archives of the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction. Through Oct. 30. (Grey Art Gallery, 33 Washington Place.)

"MESDAMES MORTER: STRIKING POSES, SELF-PORTRAITS, 1918-28"—Black-and-white shots by these London-based proto-feminist sisters in a variety of lavish costumes and roles. Also on view is a show devoted to other influential women of the twenties. Through Nov. 6. (Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

SYLVIA PLACHY—Recent photographs of New York street life. (Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, 120 Park Ave., at 42nd St.)

GEORGE SEGAL—A series of twenty-five black-and-white photographs of the streets of New York and New Jersey by this artist best known for his sculpture. Through Nov. 27. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St.)

CY TWOMBLY—Twombly's photographic début features subject matter that includes tulips, trees, and Roman antiquities. Through Dec. 4. (Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.)

WILLIAM WEGMAN—Selections from the artist's new book, "Little Red Riding Hood," which, like his previous effort, "Cinderella," features Wegman's famous Weimaraners, Fay and Battina (along with newcomers Chundo and Crooky), dressed up in the fairy-tale roles. Opens Oct. 28. Through Nov. 27. (Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St.)

"STORIES AND PHOTOGRAPHS: TWENTY YEARS IN 'VOGUE' BY GRACE CODDINGTON"—Fashion photography from the pages of *Vogue*, featuring work by, among others, Beaton, Penn, Newton, and Weber. Through Nov. 24. (Danziger, 130 Prince St.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St.—"Mexico Through Foreign Eyes" features more than two hundred photographs by Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paul Strand, and others. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Deeper Into Chants

Lovers of early music—really early music—should make hay this week, as two eminent medieval-music groups offer decidedly different programs on consecutive nights. On October 28, Marcel Pérès will lead his Ensemble Organum in a program of Old Roman chant from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries, in the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, where incense always hangs heavy in the air. The following evening, in Weill Recital Hall, Ensemble Project Ars Nova will offer late-medieval secular works by Johannes Ciconia, Antonio Zachara, and Matteo da Perugia. You get atmosphere one night, comfortable seats the next.

Both ensembles were founded in 1982—Project Ars Nova in Basel, Organum near Avignon (but since removed to an abbey in the Loire valley)—and both pursue a similar modus operandi: they plumb their repertoires through total immersion in the music, divorcing themselves as much as possible from historical preconceptions and theoretical assumptions handed down by non-performing musicologists. Pérès, for example, had to clear his mind of the traditions associated with Gregorian chant (a ninth-century French invention) before he could make the earlier Roman repertoire come to life. Recognizing that seventh- and eighth-century Rome was a hotbed of Greek culture—fourteen of the twenty Popes who reigned between 655 and 772 were Greek-speaking—he had a Greek precentor initiate his singers into the subtleties of Byzantine liturgical singing, from which—Pérès believes—Old Roman chant must have evolved. The result is riveting: chant that unrolls polyphonically, rich in micro-intervals, sinuous in ornamentation, rapturous in its cascading Alleluias.

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; for Alice Tully Hall, 875-5050; for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800; for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719; and for the 92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St., 996-1100.)

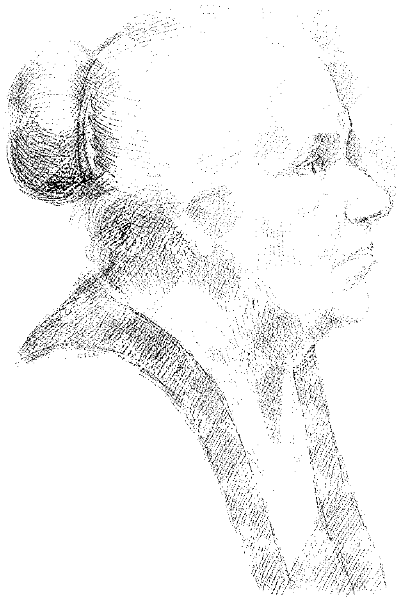
OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE, with Dawn Upshaw, Elizabeth Carter, Frank Lopardo, Manfred Hemm, and Hans Sotin; conducted by James Levine. (Oct. 27 and Oct. 30 at 8.) . . . STIFFELIO, by Verdi, with Sharon Sweet, Plácido Domingo, Vladimir Chernov, and Paul Plishka; James Levine. (Oct. 28 and Nov. 1 at 8.) . . . LA BOHÈME, with Veronica Villarroel, Carol Neblett, Richard Leech, and Timothy Noble; Carlo Rizzi. (Oct. 29 and Nov. 2 at 8.) . . . MADAMA BUTTERFLY, with Yoko Watanabe, Wendy White, Franco Farina, and Kim Josephson; Christian Badea. (Oct. 30 at 1:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House.)

New York City Opera—MADAMA BUTTERFLY. (Oct. 27 at 7:30.) . . . TOSCA. (Oct. 29 at 8.) . . . LA RONDINE. (Oct. 30 at 1:30.) . . . LE NOZZE DI FIGARO. (Oct. 30 at 8.) . . . CARMEN. (Oct. 31 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

TOM CURRY

"Orphée"—An opera by Philip Glass, based on Cocteau's film of the same name; featuring soprano Elizabeth Futral and baritone Eugene Perry; Dennis Russell Davies conducting. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Oct. 27 at 7; Oct. 28-31 and Nov. 1 at 8; and Oct. 31 at 3.)



Tatiana Nikolaeva at the 92nd Street Y.

Hell's Kitchen Opera—Presenting Orff's "Die Kluge" and Murray Borden's "The Dead." (Vineyard Theatre, 309 E. 26th St. 489-7938. Oct. 28-30 at 8 and Oct. 31 at 7.)

Amato Opera Company—Presenting "Aida." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Oct. 30 at 7:30 and Oct. 31 at 2:30. Through Nov. 21.)

"Mahagonny Songspiel"—The jocularly sinister 1927 classic by Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht, fully staged, sung in its original mixture of English and German; conducted by Bart Folse. Also on the bill is Weill's "Kleine Dreigroschenmusik." (New School, 66 W. 12th St. Oct. 30 and Nov. 2 at 8. For information about tickets, call 229-5689.)

San Francisco Western Opera Theatre—The touring arm of the San Francisco Opera, presenting their staging of "Die Fledermaus," in a production by John Copley. (Whitman Hall, Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, Brooklyn College. 1-718 951-4500. Oct. 30 at 8.)

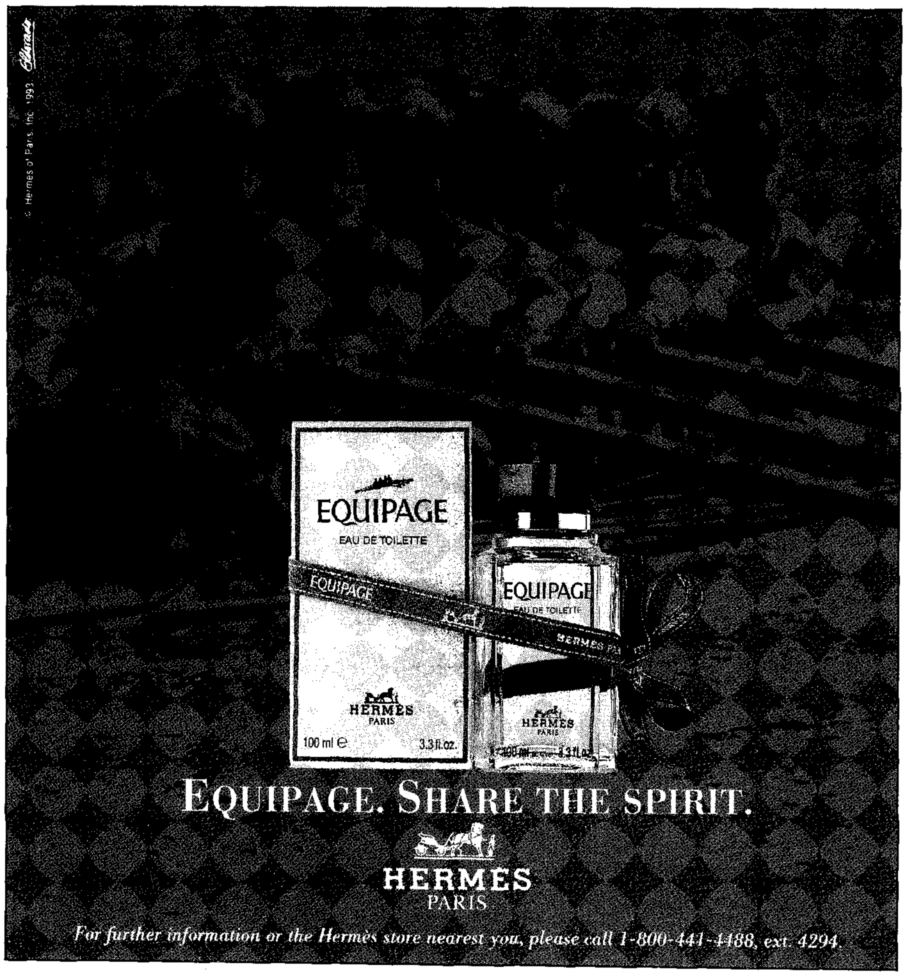
ORCHESTRAS

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall, Raymond Leppard conducting. Oct. 28 and Oct. 30 at 8 and Nov. 2 at 7:30: Bartók's "Dance Suite," Grieg's "Symphonic Dances," Ravel's "Valses Nobles et Sentimentales," and Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker" Suite. . . . ¶ Oct. 30 at 2: The same program, minus the Grieg.

Berlin Philharmonic—At Carnegie Hall, Claudio Abbado conducting three Mahler programs. Oct. 28 at 8: The "Kindertotenlieder" (with mezzo-soprano Marjana Lipovšek) and the Symphony No. 5. . . . ¶ Oct. 29 at 8: Songs from "Des Knaben Wunderhorn" (with soprano Sylvia McNair) and the Symphony No. 4. . . . ¶ Oct. 30 at 8: Symphony No. 9.

Suk Chamber Orchestra—Josef Suk leads music by Czech composers—Mysliveček, Janáček, and Vanhal (a violin concerto, in which the conductor doubles as soloist)—as well as Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings. (Avery Fisher Hall. Oct. 31 at 3.)

American Composers Orchestra—Dennis Russell Davies conducts David Soley's "relieves/repoussé," Copland's long-lost ballet score "Grohg" (in its New York première), Michael Daugherty's "Oh Lois!," and Sessions' Symphony No. 7. (Carnegie Hall. Oct. 31 at 3.)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MUSIC—Cont'd

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA—Charles Dutoit conducts Steven Stucky's "Son et Lumière," Mendelssohn's E-Minor Violin Concerto (with Maxim Vengerov), and Brahms' Symphony No. 1. (Avery Fisher Hall. Nov. 1 at 8.)

RECITALS

EUGENIA ZUKERMAN AND ANTHONY NEWMAN—The flutist and the harpsichordist play works that explore the balance between the sacred and secular music of Baroque France. (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 930-0571. Oct. 27 at 6.)

YO-YO MA AND EMANUEL AX—The cellist and the pianist perform sonatas by Beethoven (his Fifth) and Chopin, Beethoven's "Variations on 'Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen,'" and works by Lutoslawski and Corigliano (the New York première of his "Phantasmagoria"). (Avery Fisher Hall. Oct. 27 at 8.)

SHARON ISBIN AND THE CLEVELAND STRING QUARTET—The guitarist plays Albéniz's "Asturias" and assists the ensemble in a new work by David Diamond; the foursome offers quartets by Beethoven in F-Major (Op. 18, No. 1) and Brahms (in C Minor). (92nd Street Y. Oct. 27 at 8.)

ERIKO SATO AND DAVID OEI—The violinist and the pianist perform three duo-sonatas by Mozart. (CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th St. Oct. 27 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

BERLIN IMPROVISING COMPOSERS ENSEMBLE—Flutes, percussion, didgeridoo, and so on, voicing the inspiration of the moment. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Oct. 27 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC—Violinist Ik-Hwan Bae, violist Paul Neubauer, cellist Fred Sherry, and pianist Joseph Villa pool their talents for chamber music by Mozart (his A-Major Violin Sonata, K. 305, and Divertimento for String Trio, K. 563) and Sergei Taneyev (his E-Major Piano Quartet). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Oct. 28 at 6:30 and Oct. 31 at 4; the Thursday event is a candlelit dinner-concert.)

PINCHAS ZUKERMAN AND MARC NEIKRUG—The violinist and the pianist perform sonatas by Ravel and Brahms (his Third); the Manhattan School of Music Chamber Sinfonia backs up Mr. Zukerman in Vivaldi's "Four Seasons." A benefit concert. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. 749-3300. Oct. 28 at 7.)

ENSEMBLE ORGANUM—Marcel Pérès directs the a-cappella vocal ensemble in Old Roman chant from the seventh through the thirteenth centuries, including a complete Mass for Easter Day as it might have been sung in the papal chapel of that time. Presented by Music Before 1800. (Church of St. Mary the Virgin, 145 W. 46th St. Oct. 28 at 8. For information about tickets, call 666-0675.)

ŞAHAN ARZRUNI—The pianist and colleagues perform six works by Aram Khatchaturian, including several American premières; assisted by violinist Ani Kavafian and clarinettist Charles Neidich. (Merkin Concert Hall. Oct. 28 at 8.)

ODIN RATHNAM—Violinist, performing sonatas by Beethoven (his First) and Saint-Saëns (his First, too), in addition to works by Schumann, Stravinsky, and Kreisler; with pianist Rohan de Silva. (Alice Tully Hall. Oct. 28 at 8.)

CHO-LIANG LIN AND FRIENDS—The violinist is joined by cellist Jian Wang and pianist Li Jian in Nielsen's Violin Sonata No. 2, Ravel's Sonata for Violin and Cello, and Brahms' B-Major Trio. (Taipei Theatre, 1221 Sixth Ave., at 48th St. 373-1850. Oct. 29-30 at 7:30.)

ENSEMBLE PROJECT ARS NOVA—Or Ensemble PAN, as they are sometimes known, performing works by the transitional late-medieval composer Johannes Ciconia and several of his contemporaries. (Weill Recital Hall. Oct. 29 at 8.)

ZAIDEE PARKINSON—Pianist, performing an all-Schumann program, including the "Fantasiestücke," "Kinderszenen," and "Papillons." (Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace, 28 E. 20th St. Oct. 30 at 2. No charge beyond museum admission.)

TATIANA NIKOLAEVA—The pianist performs the first of two recitals in the course of which she will traverse all twenty-four of Shostakovich's Preludes and Fugues (Op. 87). (92nd Street Y. Oct. 30 at 8. The second concert will take place on Nov. 3.)

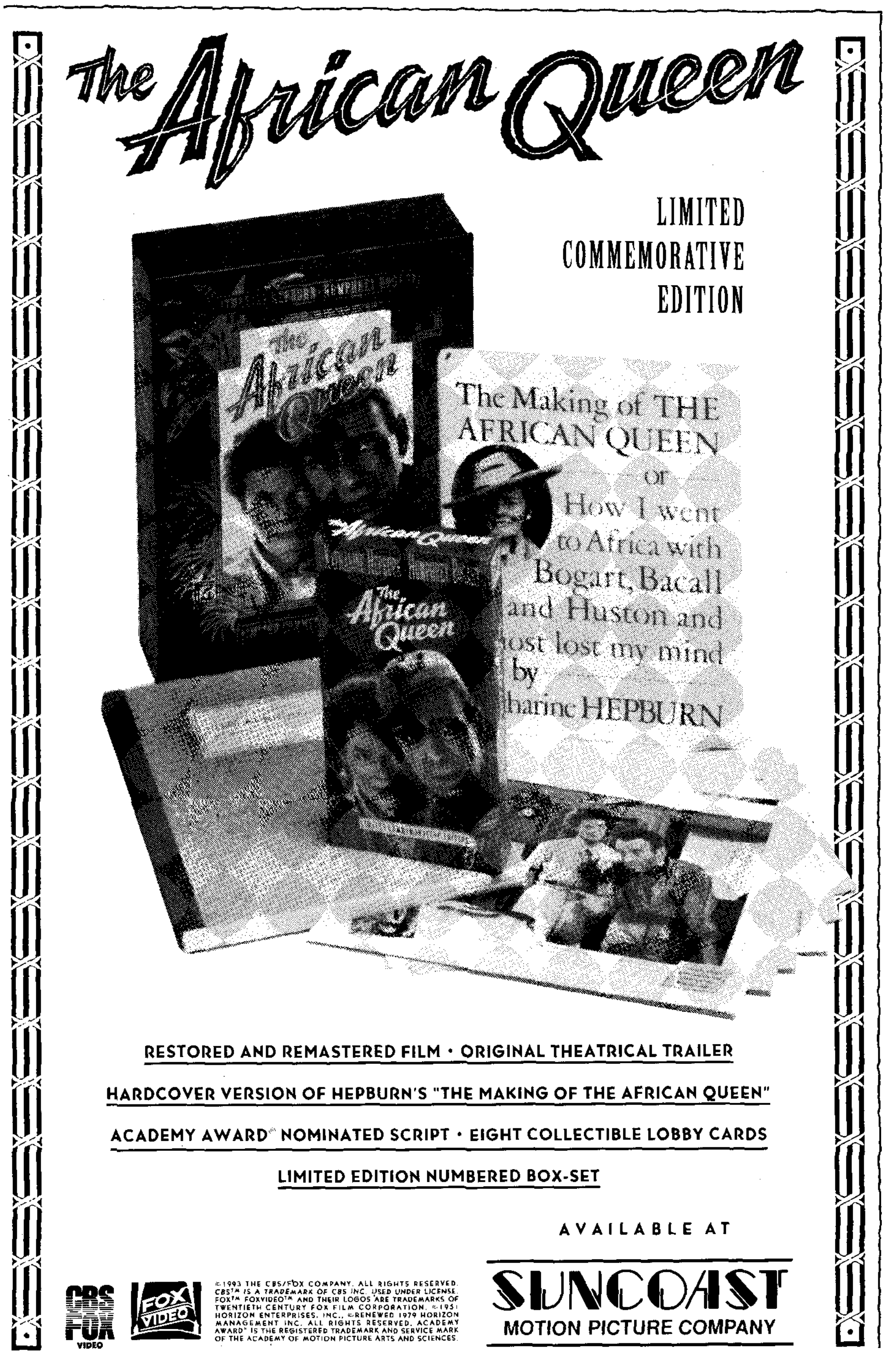
LISTENING BOOTH

SHOSTAKOVICH: 24 PRELUDES AND FUGUES, OP. 87; Tatiana Nikolaeva, pianist (Hyperion). A young Moscow Conservatory graduate named Tatiana Nikolaeva so wowed the jurors at the 1950 Bach Competition in Leipzig that one of the judges—Dmitri Shostakovich—wrote for her a modern counterpart to Bach's "Well-Tempered Clavier," the cycles of preludes and fugues that sum up the tenets of European counterpoint. A lifelong friendship ensued, during which Nikolaeva gained renown as an interpreter of both Bach's "48" and Shostakovich's "24." Though her emergence on America's stages is recent, she has recorded the Shostakovich cycle three times—her most recent effort being the most impressive on all counts—and will play the complete set on October 30 and November 3, at the 92nd Street Y.

GUARNERI QUARTET—Performing string quartets by Mozart (in B-Flat Major, K. 458, the "Hunt") and Ravel; Grant Johannesen teams up with members of the foursome for Dvořák's F-Minor Piano Trio. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Oct. 30 at 8.)

JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET—Performing Haydn's Quartet in F Major (Op. 50, No. 5), Berg's "Lyric Suite," and Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" Quartet. (Washington Irving High School, Irving Pl. at 16th St. Oct. 30 at 8. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.)

SONIC BOOM FESTIVAL—This year's monthlong



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celebration of the new continues with an appearance by Newband, performing music by Dean Drummond, David Lang, Maki Ishii, and others. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Oct. 30 at 8.)

Elyane Laussade—Pianist, performing works by Mozart, Chopin, Cécile Chaminade, and others. (Merkin Concert Hall. Oct. 30 at 8.)

Paradox Trio—A quartet (notwithstanding its name), performing Balkan folk music. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. Oct. 31 at 11:30 A.M. Admission is free, but call 1-718 885-2478 to reserve a seat.)

Barbara Hendricks—The soprano offers a recital of songs associated with her teacher, the late Jennie Tourel; including works by Mozart, Rossini ("La Regata Veneziana"), Liszt, Dvořák, Debussy ("Fêtes Galantes"), and Rachmaninoff. With pianist Staffan Scheja. (Alice Tully Hall. Oct. 31 at 2.)

Christopher O'Riley—The pianist performs Rameau's A-Major Keyboard Suite, the New York première of Richard Danielpour's "Enchanted Garden," and Stravinsky's "Apollon Musagète" and "Trois Mouvements de Petrouchka." (92nd Street Y. Oct. 31 at 3.)

Friends and Enemies of New Music—Soprano Marni Nixon performs the New York première of Bolcom's "Tillinghast Duo" in a program that also includes music by Randall Snyder, John Link, Tom Cipullo, Nancy Gunn, and Cynthia Miller. (Greenwich House Music School, 46 Barrow St. Oct. 31 at 3. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the performance.)

"The Bells of Hell"—That, dear friends, is reputedly the title of an American salvationist hymn. Theophil Rusterholz has arranged the tune for carillon, and Joseph Clair Davis will include it on his program as a moral reminder to the Upper West Side on Halloween. Want to sing along? Here's your song sheet:

The bells of Hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling
  For you and not for me.
 For me the Angels sing-a-ling-a-ling,
  They've got the goods for me.
 O death where is thy sting-a-ling-a-ling?
  O grave thy victory?
 The bells of Hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling
  For you and not for me.

(Riverside Church, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. Oct. 31 at 3. No tickets necessary, just a pure soul.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—The Beaux Arts Trio appears as the Society's guests, performing Rorem's "Spring Music" and Beethoven's "Kakadu" Variations; their members will also collaborate with Society regulars in Beethoven's C-Minor Violin Sonata (Op. 30, No. 2) and Mozart's G-Minor Piano Quintet. (Alice Tully Hall. Oct. 31 at 5 and Nov. 2 at 7:30.)

Arista Piano Trio—Performing trios by Rachmaninoff (in G Minor) and Brahms (in C Major). (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Oct. 31 at 6. Admission is free, but call 876-6000 to reserve a seat.)

Yin Cheng Zong—Pianist, performing Haydn's F-Minor Variations, Debussy's Twelve Préludes (Book Two), several works by Chopin, and arrangements of pieces from ancient China. (Carnegie Hall. Oct. 31 at 8.)

Keyboard Romantics—David Dubal offers the second of three evenings in which he discusses the piano music of Chopin, Schumann, and Liszt; Juilliard students assist with the music. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 734-2130. Nov. 2 at 7:30.)

Josef Suk—The violinist performs two sonatas by Beethoven (Op. 47 and Op. 96), as well as one by Beethoven's royal patron and pupil the Archduke Rudolph of Austria; with pianist Susan Kagan. (Sylvia and Danny Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Lexington Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Nov. 2 at 8.)

League of Composers/I.S.C.M.—Presenting contemporary works informed by jazz, by Wolpe, Babbitt, John Carrisi, John Zorn, Anthony Davis, and Eric Dolphy. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 2 at 8.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Jets Vs. Giants—The last time the Giants started off as well as they did this season (the team's record is 4–1), they won the Super Bowl. The Jets had a rougher start, but they are no slouches. Halloween seems like a perfect day for the spectacle of two New Jersey teams dressed up in New York uniforms. (Game time, 1 p.m.)

Rangers—Vs. the Montreal Canadiens, Oct. 28. . . . ¶ Vs. the Devils, Oct. 31. (Game time, 7:30.)

Islanders—Vs. the Vancouver Canucks, Nov. 2 at 7:40.

Devils—Vs. the Philadelphia Flyers, Oct. 30 at 1:35.

(The Jets and the Giants play at Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands, 1-201 935-8111; the Rangers at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; the Islanders at Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 794-9300; and the Devils at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

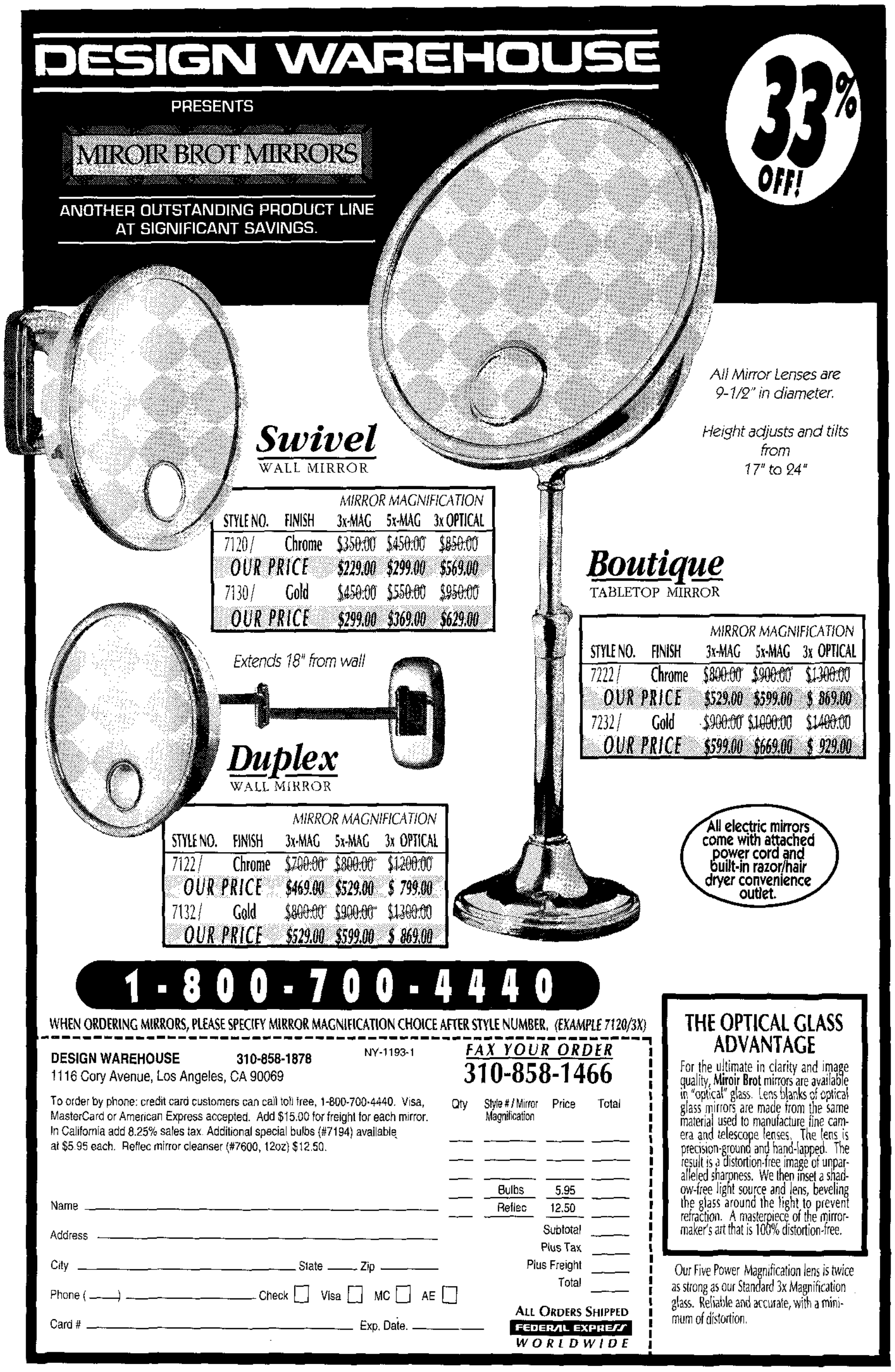
FOR KIDS

(A list of activities for children and their parents or other adults.)

Mira, Miró—The Museum of Modern Art's family gallery program offers an exploration of the blockbuster Miró exhibit, on Oct. 30, from 10 to 11 (before the museum is open to the general public). (Edward John Noble Education Center, 18 W. 54th St. 708-9400.)

Another Opening, Another Show—Central Park's Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre previews a brand-new production, "The True Story of Rumpelstiltskin," on Oct. 30 at noon and 3. In a surprising turn of events, the audience is requested to appear in costume. (Central Park West and 81st St. entrance. For reservations, call 988-9093.)

Positively Witchy—Storyteller Felicity Beil reads from Alice Low's book "The Witch Who Was Afraid of Witches." Recommended ages: four and older. (Children's Museum of Manhattan, 212 W. 83rd St. 721-1234. Oct. 30 at 2.) . . . ¶ You can also take in a musical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version of "The Witch Who Was Afraid of Witches," adapted by Ms. Low herself. With a cast of six and a score by Jake Stern. Recommended ages: three to ten. (One Dream Theatre, 232 West Broadway. 274-1450. Oct. 28-31 at 1.)

"P" is for Party—A Halloween extravaganza at the Children's Museum of Manhattan, with a haunted maze, mask-making, ghost stories, and other scary stuff. (Oct. 30-31, from 10 to 5.) . . . ¶ On Oct. 30-31, from 11 to 5, the New York Hall of Science, the Queens Zoo, and the Queens Museum of Art combine forces for a Halloween revel, which culminates in a "creative creatures" parade at 4 on Oct. 31. (Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Queens. 1-718 699-0005.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Gettin' Ghoulish—The Greenwich Village Halloween Parade is an initiation of sorts into city life; you officially become a resident once you've been there, done that. It's even better in costume. Beginning at 7 on Oct. 31, festooned celebrants will weave up Sixth Ave. from Spring St. to 22nd St.

Little Piggies—It's Hog-O-Ween, at the South Street Seaport's Harvest Festival. Highlights include a swine parade, on Oct. 30, from 1 to 3, which will be presented by the Long Island Potbellied Pig Association. (Pier 16, East River at Fulton St. Oct. 30-31, from 12 to 5. No tickets necessary.)

Vampires—"Nosferatu," the 1922 German silent movie, featuring the ugliest Dracula on celluloid, will be shown at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, with organ accompaniment by Lee Erwin. Immediately following the film, the Cathedral will host the Grand Procession of Ghouls. (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 662-2133. Oct. 30 at 7 and 11.) . . . ¶ Spookmeister Anne Rice will be interviewed by Digby Diehl, the literary editor of "Good Morning America." (Congregation Rodeph Sholom, 7 W. 83rd St. Oct. 31 at 8. Tickets at the door on the evening of the interview.)

At the Universalist Church, readings from "Mondo Barbie."

Village Ball—Think "East Village Environment Installation." Picture costumes more colorful and intricate than even those at Wigstock. Put them together, add a little downtown entertainment and a few fire-eaters, and you have the Theatre for the New City's Village Costume Ball. Costume or formal dress is required. (155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109. Oct. 31, from 6 to way past the witching hour.)

Walks on the Wild Side—Oct. 28 at 7: Ghosts, goblins, murder, and mischief along the Hudson. For more information, call 267-9700. . . . ¶ Oct. 31 at 1: Foliage and ghosts at Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery. For more information, call 1-718 469-5277.

Role Model—Let's face it—it *is* Barbie's world. Now she even has her own anthology. Kathryn Harrison and A. M. Homes, among others, will read their contributions to "Mondo Barbie." (Universalist Church, 160 Central Park W., at 76th St. Oct. 29 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading. Free admission if you bring your own Barbie.)

Bonsai North and South—There are two bonsai shows in town. The Brooklyn Botanic Garden's will feature the heartier outdoor varieties. (1000 Washington Ave., near Grand Army Plaza. Oct. 27-31, from 10 to 4. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Members of the Yama Ki Bonsai Society will display their plants in the rotunda of the Main Building at the New York Botanical Garden. (Bronx Park. Oct. 28-31, from 11 to 4. Admission by contribution.)

Post This—The Postage Stamp Mega-Event will feature stamp appraisals, dealers, two first-day-of-issue stamps, and an appearance by sixteen-year-old Jason Parsons, who designed a duck stamp. (Madison Square Garden Exposition Rotunda, Seventh Ave. at 32nd St. Oct. 28, from noon to 8; Oct. 29-30, from 10 to 6; and Oct. 31, from 10 to 4. No tickets necessary.)

Poesi—Fifty poets from Scandinavia will gather for the Nordic Poetry Festival. Highlights include a Tomas Tranströmer evening with, among others, John Ashbery, Linda Gregg, and Derek Walcott. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. Oct. 30-31, from noon to 8. For more information, call 682-0727.)

Readings—Oct. 28 at 7: Armand Schwerner, W. D. Snodgrass, and Anne Waldman will read from their own poetry. (Poetry Society of America, 15 Gramercy Park S. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.) . . . ¶ Oct. 29 at 7: Sharon Olds and Yevgeny Yevtushenko, among others, will read from their own work. (Main Building, New York University, 100 Washington Sq. E., at Washington Pl. 998-8816.) . . . ¶ Nov. 1 at 7: Nahid Rachlin and others will read from their own work, in a PEN-sponsored international evening. (568 Broadway. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Nov. 1 at 8: Edmund White will read from his new fiction. With David Malouf. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

Memorandum—Nov. 2, from 6 A.M. to 9 P.M.: Will the next mayor win by a hair or by a landslide? Will there be a Republic of Staten Island? You decide. All you have to do is vote. The offices of mayor, comptroller, and public advocate are up for grabs on Election Day.

MELLOW FRUITFULNESS

Autumn in New York may mean the end of the season for Jersey tomatoes and sweet corn, but at the city's twenty Greenmarkets the harvest is still in full swing. At a new farmers' market up in the Bronx, about the most exotic thing you'll find among the apples, pears, yams, cabbage, beets, mums, and squash is a calabash, which looks like a bumpy green pumpkin. Meanwhile, the oldest Greenmarket, at Union Square, has burgeoned into an institution and a gourmet's delight. Brooklyn has three Greenmarkets, and though neither Queens nor Staten Island has an official Greenmarket, downtown Jamaica has an indoor Farmers Market and Food Hall with its own distinct flavor.

Union Square, 17th Street and Broadway—This is where you'll find the unusual: purple cauliflower, white eggplant, black radishes, cheese pumpkins (smooth, pale, and football-shaped, and said to be the best for pies), every kind of wild-and-crazy gourd and squash, strawberry popcorn, Italian dandelions, Japanese greens, red mustard leaves, burdock root, potted sunflowers, flowering kale, quinces, walnuts, and, while they last, colored leaves (what a scam). Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, year round.

World Trade Center, Church and Fulton Streets—Bear it in mind when you're on jury duty. Tuesdays, through December; Thursdays, year round.

Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn—The view of Prospect Park's the thing at Grand Army Plaza. A few other things that bring Brooklynites and their dogs out early on Saturday mornings are fresh milk and cream in glass bottles, turkeys and turkey sausage, fish, lamb, sheepskins, popcorn, Brussels sprouts, and decorative gourds, including one the growers call a birdhouse gourd, because you can poke holes in it, dry it, and hang it in a tree. Saturdays, year round.

Alexander Avenue at 138th Street, the Bronx—There's a Puerto Rican pie man here who is worth seeking out for his wares. Wednesdays, at least through October.

Kilmer Park, 162nd Street and Grand Concourse, the Bronx—Open Sundays through October. If business is good and weather permits, this market near Yankee Stadium will stay open till Thanksgiving.

Farmers Market Jamaica, 160th Street and Jamaica Avenue, Queens—Directly across 160th Street from the old Roxanne Swim Suit factory, with a brick-paved, trellised entrance off Jamaica Avenue, this rustic-looking year-round facility has green steel beams, high windows, a corrugated roof, and several venders (Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays). The Food Hall (closed Sundays) has a Caribbean concession called Paradise Splash, serving akee and codfish, jerk chicken, curry goat, Irish moss (a drink made from seaweed, said to be an aphrodisiac), smoky Jamaica Blue Mountain coffee, and black fruitcake, which is like nothing your aunt in Minnesota ever made.

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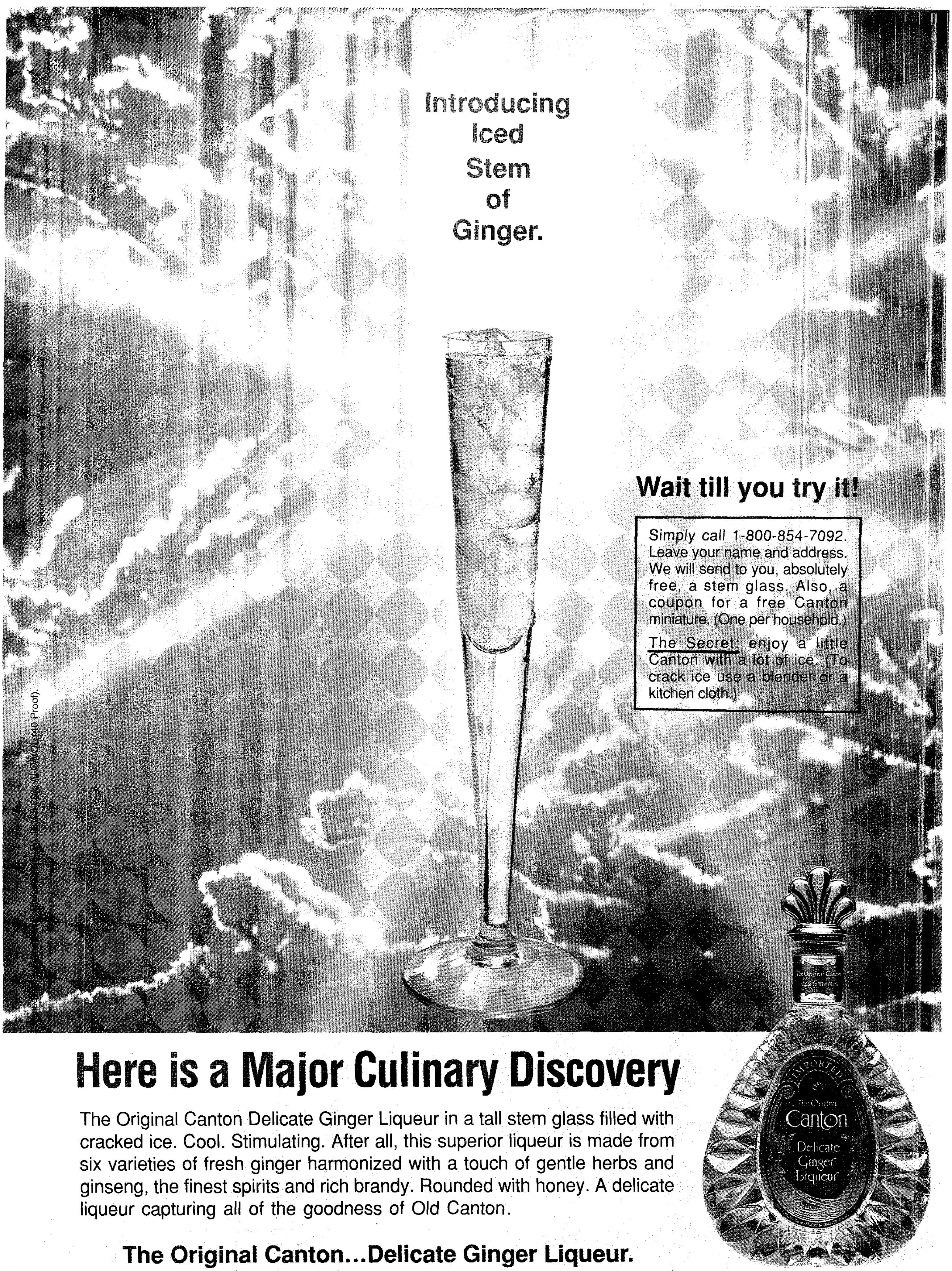

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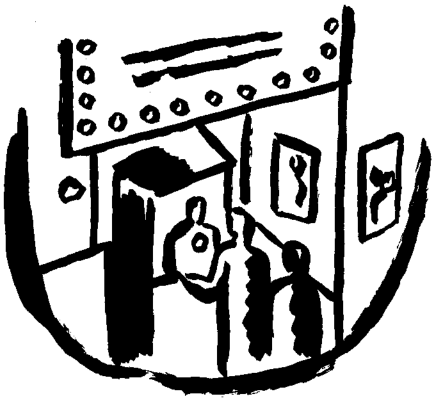

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FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN "MOVIES IN BRIEF," STARTING ON PAGE 38.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "Household Saints" (directed by Nancy Savoca), with Tracey Ullman, Vincent D'Onofrio, Lili Taylor, and Judith Malina.
Theatre 2: "Ruby in Paradise" (†).
Theatre 3: "Farewell My Concubine" (†).
Theatre 4: "Farewell My Concubine" (†).
Theatre 5: "Like Water for Chocolate" (Alfonso Arau; a Mexican film, in Spanish).
Theatre 6: "The Wedding Banquet" (Ang Lee).

Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
"No More Mr. Nice Guy" (Detlev Buck; in German); and "The Architects" (1990, Peter Kahane; in German).

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "Mr. Wonderful" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Beverly Hillbillies" (Penelope Spheeris).
Theatre 3: "Mr. Jones" (†).

Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: "Demolition Man" (†).
Theatre 2: "A Bronx Tale" (†).
Theatre 3: "M. Butterfly" (†).
Theatre 4: "Malice" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Age of Innocence" (†).
Theatre 6: "Dazed and Confused" (Richard Linklater).
Theatre 7: "Rudy" (†).

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)
Through Oct. 28: "New York in Short," a program of two short films.
From Oct. 29: "Sex & Zen" (Michael Mak; in Cantonese).

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: "Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Joy Luck Club" (†).
Theatre 3: "Gettysburg" (Ronald F. Maxwell).
Theatre 4: "Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas" (†).
Theatre 5: "Twenty Bucks" (Keva Rosenfeld).
Theatre 6: "Cool Runnings" (†).
Theatre 7: "Baraka" (Mark Magidson and Ron Fricke).

19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "Mr. Wonderful" (†).
Theatre 2: "Rudy" (†).
Theatre 3: "Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas" (†).
Theatre 4: "Cool Runnings" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Joy Luck Club" (†).
Theatre 6: "Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas" (†).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"Judgment Night" (Stephen Hopkins), with Emilio Estevez, Cuba Goodings, Jr., Stephen Dorff, and Jeremy Piven.

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: "Malice" (†).
Theatre 2: "Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Joy Luck Club" (†).
Theatre 4: Through Oct. 28: "Cool Runnings" (†). From Oct. 29: "Fatal Instinct" (Carl Reiner).

34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "By the Sword" (Jeremy Kagan), with Eric Roberts and F. Murray Abraham.
Theatre 2: "Demolition Man" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Fugitive" (Andrew Davis), with Harrison Ford and Tommy Lee Jones.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"The Beverly Hillbillies" (Penelope Spheeris), with Diedrich Bader, Dabney Coleman, Erika Eleniak, Cloris Leachman, Lily Tomlin, and Jim Varney.

Eastside Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
"Farewell My Concubine" (†).

Sutton I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: "Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas" (†).
Theatre 2: "Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas" (†).

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"The Good Son" (Joseph Ruben), with Macaulay Culkin.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Baraka" (Mark Magidson and Ron Fricke).

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Judgment Night" (Stephen Hopkins), with Emilio Estevez, Cuba Goodings, Jr., Stephen Dorff, and Jeremy Piven.
Theatre 2: "Twenty Bucks" (Keva Rosenfeld).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"For Love or Money" (Barry Sonnenfeld), with Michael J. Fox.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Manhattan Murder Mystery" (Woody Allen).
Theatre 2: "The Age of Innocence" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "Short Cuts" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Joy Luck Club" (†).
Theatre 3: "Short Cuts" (†).

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)
Theatre 1: "Demolition Man" (†).
Theatre 2: "Flight of the Innocent" (Carlo Carlei, in Italian), with Manuel Colao.
Theatre 3: "Mr. Jones" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Beverly Hillbillies" (Penelope Spheeris), with Diedrich Bader, Dabney Coleman, Erika Eleniak, Cloris Leachman, Lily Tomlin, and Jim Varney.
Theatre 5: "M. Butterfly" (†).
Theatre 6: Through Oct. 28: "Flight of the Innocent." From Oct. 29: "Fatal Instinct" (Carl Reiner).

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "The Fugitive" (Andrew Davis), with Harrison Ford and Tommy Lee Jones.
Theatre 2: "Rudy" (†).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"A Bronx Tale" (†).

New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "Mr. Wonderful" (†).
Theatre 2: "Malice" (†).

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Cool Runnings" (†).

Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Fearless" (†).

East 85th Street, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
Through Oct. 28: "The Good Son" (Joseph Ruben), with Macaulay Culkin.
From Oct. 29: "Fatal Instinct" (Carl Reiner).

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "Judgment Night" (Stephen Hopkins), with Emilio Estevez, Cuba Goodings, Jr., Stephen Dorff, and Jeremy Piven.
Theatre 2: "Malice" (†).

Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)
Theatre 1: "Gettysburg" (Ronald F. Maxwell).
Theatre 2: "Mr. Wonderful" (†).
Theatre 3: "A Bronx Tale" (†).
Theatre 4: "Rudy" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Age of Innocence" (†).
Theatre 6: "Demolition Man" (†).
Theatre 7: "Cool Runnings" (†).

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "The Joy Luck Club" (†).
Theatre 2: "Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas" (†).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: "Strictly Propaganda" (directed by Wolfgang Kissel), a documentary.
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: "It's All True: Based on an Unfinished Film by Orson Welles" (†).

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "True Romance" (Tony Scott), with Christian Slater and Patricia Arquette.
Theatre 2: "Judgment Night" (Stephen Hopkins), with Emilio Estevez, Cuba Goodings, Jr., Stephen Dorff, and Jeremy Piven.

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "The Fugitive" (Andrew Davis), with Harrison Ford and Tommy Lee Jones.
Theatre 2: "The Good Son" (Joseph Ruben).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "Bad Behavior" (Les Blair), with Stephen Rea and Sinead Cusack.
Theatre 2: "King of the Hill" (Steven Soderbergh), with Jesse Bradford.
Theatre 3: Through Oct. 28: "A One Way Ticket." From Oct. 29: "Black Cat" (Stephen Shin).
Theatre 4: "The Ballad of Little Jo" (Maggie Greenwald), with Suzy Amis.

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "The Good Son" (Joseph Ruben).
Theatre 2: "A Bronx Tale" (†).
Theatre 3: "Demolition Man" (†).
Theatre 4: "Judgment Night" (Stephen Hopkins), with Emilio Estevez, Cuba Goodings, Jr., Stephen Dorff, and Jeremy Piven.
Theatre 5: "Malice" (†).
Theatre 6: "The Beverly Hillbillies" (Penelope Spheeris).
Theatre 7: Through Oct. 28: "Dazed and Confused" (Richard Linklater). From Oct. 29: "Fatal Instinct" (Carl Reiner).
Theatre 8: Through Oct. 28: "Demolition Man" (†). From Oct. 29: "Fearless" (†).
Theatre 9: "Flight of the Innocent" (Carlo Carlei, in Italian), with Manuel Colao.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "The Fugitive" (Andrew Davis), with Harrison Ford and Tommy Lee Jones.
Theatre 2: "For Love or Money" (Barry Sonnenfeld), with Michael J. Fox.
Theatre 3: "Jurassic Park" (Steven Spielberg).

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"The Joy Luck Club" (†).

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "For Love or Money" (Barry Sonnenfeld), with Michael J. Fox.
Theatre 2: "Much Ado About Nothing" (Kenneth Branagh).
Theatre 3: "Jurassic Park" (Steven Spielberg).
Theatre 4: "Gettysburg" (Ronald F. Maxwell).
Theatre 5: "Orlando" (Sally Potter).
Theatre 6: "Manhattan Murder Mystery" (Woody Allen).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"The Age of Innocence" (†).

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"Dazed and Confused" (Richard Linklater).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"It's All True: Based on an Unfinished Film by Orson Welles" (†).

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Theatre 1: "Like Water for Chocolate" (Alfonso Arau; a Mexican film, in Spanish).
Theatre 2: "Twenty Bucks" (Keva Rosenfeld).

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th. (586-1900)
Through Oct. 28: "King of the Hill" (Steven Soderbergh), with Jesse Bradford.
From Oct. 29: "Wicked City," a Japanese animated film.

Paris, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"Jamón Jamón" (Bigas Luna; in Spanish).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"The Wedding Banquet" (Ang Lee).

Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"Mr. Wonderful" (†).

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"Judgment Night" (Stephen Hopkins), with Emilio Estevez, Cuba Goodings, Jr., Stephen Dorff, and Jeremy Piven.

MOVIE HOUSES–Cont'd

Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)

Theatre 1: "Farewell My Concubine" (†).

Theatre 2: "Farewell My Concubine" (†).

Theatre 3: "The Wedding Banquet" (Ang Lee).

Theatre 4: "Ruby in Paradise" (†).

Theatre 5: "La Chasse aux Papillons" (Otar Iosseliani; in French).

Theatre 6: "Household Saints" (Nancy Savoca), with Tracey Ullman, Vincent D'Onofrio, Lili Taylor, and Judith Malina.

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)

Through Oct. 28: "The Good Son" (Joseph Ruben), with Macaulay Culkin.

From Oct. 29: "Fatal Instinct" (Carl Reiner).

84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)

Theatre 1: "The Joy Luck Club" (†).

Theatre 2: "Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas" (†).

Theatre 3: "Malice" (†).

Theatre 4: "Rudy" (†).

Theatre 5: "A Bronx Tale" (†).

Theatre 6: "Demolition Man" (†).

Metro Cinema I and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)

Theatre 1: "The Beverly Hillbillies" (Penelope Spheeris), with Diedrich Bader, Dabney Coleman, Erika Eleniak, Cloris Leachman, Lily Tomlin, and Jim Varney.

Theatre 2: "Mr. Jones" (†).

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)

Theatre 1: "Cool Runnings" (†).

Theatre 2: "The Fugitive" (Andrew Davis), with Harrison Ford and Tommy Lee Jones.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)

Theatre 1: "Demolition Man" (†).

Theatre 2: "Rudy" (†).

Theatre 3: Through Oct. 28: "A One Way Ticket." From Oct. 29: "Return of the Living Dead 3" (directed by Brian Yuzna).

Theatre 4: "The Good Son" (Joseph Ruben).

Theatre 5: "The Fugitive" (Andrew Davis), with Harrison Ford and Tommy Lee Jones.

Theatre 6: Through Oct. 28: "Mr. Jones" (†). From Oct. 29: "Fatal Instinct" (Carl Reiner).

Theatre 7: "A Bronx Tale" (†).

Embassy I, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)

"Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas" (†).

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)

Theatre 1: "Cool Runnings" (†).

Theatre 2: "The Beverly Hillbillies" (Penelope Spheeris), with Diedrich Bader, Dabney Coleman, Erika Eleniak, Cloris Leachman, Lily Tomlin, and Jim Varney.

Theatre 3: "The Program" (David S. Ward).

Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)

"Striking Distance" (Rowdy Herrington).

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)

Theatre 1: "Malice" (†).

Theatre 2: "Judgment Night" (Stephen Hopkins), with Emilio Estevez, Cuba Goodings, Jr., Stephen Dorff, and Jeremy Piven.

REVIVAL HOUSES

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)

Through Oct. 28: "Saratoga" (1937, directed by Jack Conway), with Jean Harlow and Clark Gable; and "Suzy" (1936, George Fitzmaurice), with Harlow, Franchot Tone, and Cary Grant.

From Oct. 29: "La Strada" (1954, Federico Fellini; in Italian), with Anthony Quinn, Richard Basehart, and Giulietta Masina.

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)

Oct. 27: "The Witches of Eastwick" (1987, George Miller), with Jack Nicholson, Cher, Susan Sarandon, and Michelle Pfeiffer; and "Batman" (1989, Tim Burton), with Jack Nicholson and Michael Keaton.

Oct. 28-30: "North by Northwest" (1959, Alfred Hitchcock), with Cary Grant, Eva Marie Saint, and James Mason; and "Shadow of a Doubt" (1942, Hitchcock), with Teresa Wright and Joseph Cotten.

Oct. 31-Nov. 2: "West Side Story" (1961, Robert Wise), with Natalie Wood, Richard Beymer, Russ Tamblyn, Rita Moreno, and George Chakiris.

Thalia, B'way at 95th. (316-4962)

Through Oct. 28: "Angels with Dirty Faces" (1938, Michael Curtiz), with James Cagney, Pat O'Brien, and Humphrey Bogart; and "City for Conquest" (1940, Anatole Litvak), with Cagney and Sheridan.

Oct. 29-30: "The Krays" (1990, Peter Medak), with Gary and Martin Kemp; and "Dead Ringers" (1988, David Cronenberg), with Jeremy Irons.

At Film Forum 2, a Federico Fellini retrospective.

LEE EDWARD WOLF

Oct. 31-Nov. 1: "The Black Cat" (1934, Edgar G. Ulmer), with Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi; "Island of Lost Souls" (†); and "Freaks" (1932, Tod Browning), with Olga Baclanova, Wallace Ford, and Leila Hyams.

Nov. 2: "Reg Hartt's Sex and Violence Cartoon Festival."

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)

Oct. 27: "The Red House" (1947, Delmer Daves), with Edward G. Robinson, Lon McCallister, and Judith Anderson; and "D.O.A." (†).

Oct. 28: "I Love You, Alice B. Toklas!" (†) and "The Wild Angels" (†).

Oct. 29-30: "Breakfast at Tiffany's" (1961, Blake Edwards), with Audrey Hepburn, George Peppard, and Patricia Neal; and "Roman Holiday" (1953, William Wyler), with Hepburn and Gregory Peck.

Oct. 31: "The Bicycle Thief" (1949, Vittorio De Sica; in Italian); and "Miracle in Milan" (1951, De Sica; in Italian).

Nov. 1: "Early Summer" (1951, Yasujiro Ozu; in Japanese) and "There Was a Father" (1942, Ozu; in Japanese).

Nov. 2: "Phone Call from a Stranger" (1952, Jean Negulesco), with Shelley Winters, Gary Merrill, and Bette Davis; and "The Scapegoat" (1959, Robert Hamer), with Alec Guinness and Bette Davis.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

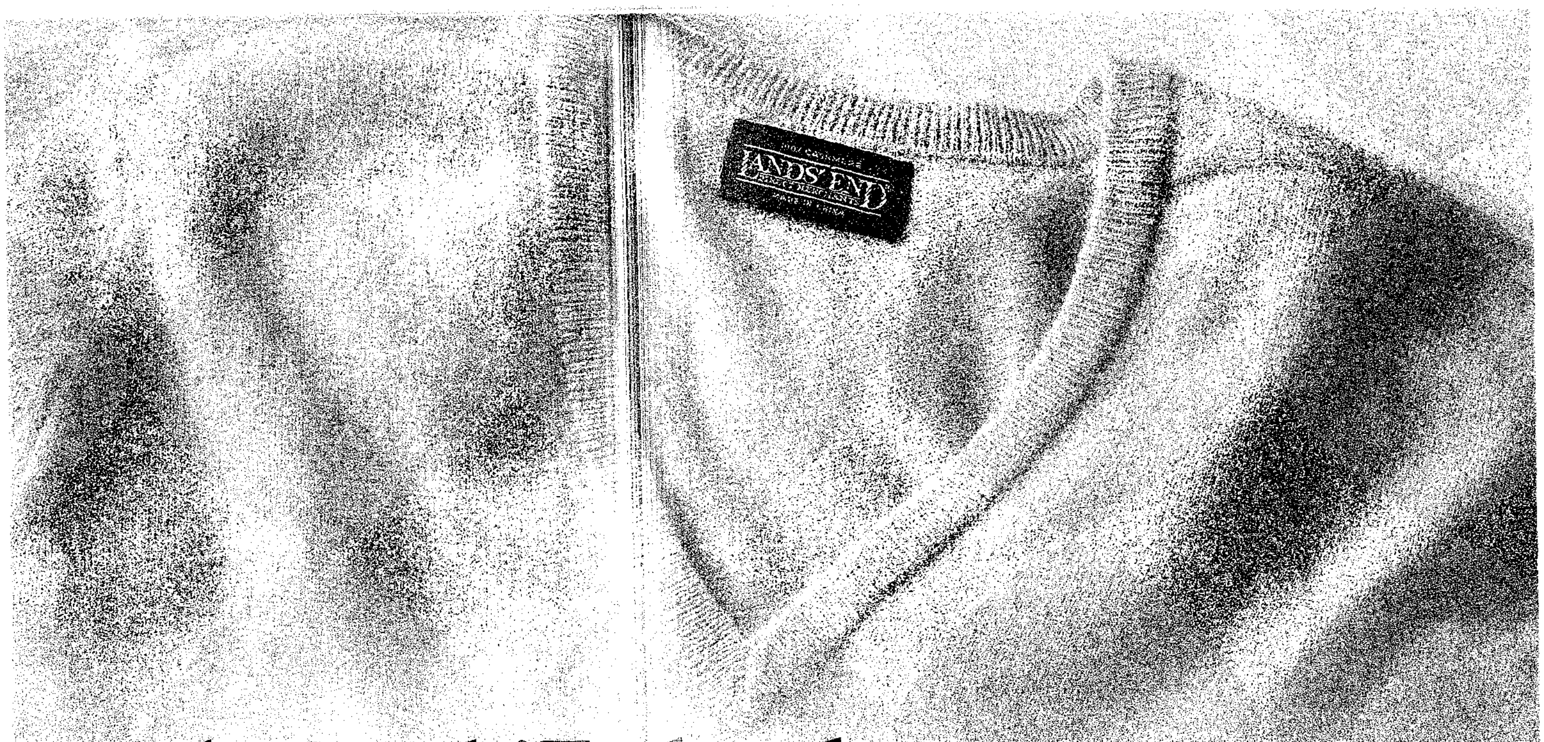
Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Oct. 28 at 2:30: "Smart Woman" (1931, directed by Gregory La Cava), with Mary Astor. . . . ¶ Oct. 28 at 3 and 6: "Piemule" (1992, Jana Sevcikova; in Czech) and "Jakub" (1992, Sevcikova; in Czech). . . . ¶ Oct. 28 at 6 and Oct. 31 at 1:30: "Bird" (1988, Clint Eastwood), with Forest Whitaker. . . . ¶ Oct. 29 at 2:30 and Oct. 31 at 5: "Virginity" (1937, Otakar Vavra; in Czech). . . . ¶ Oct. 29 at 3: "Pale Rider" (1985, Eastwood), with Eastwood. . . . ¶ Oct. 29 at 6 and Oct. 31 at 2: "The Wonderful Lie of Nina Petrovna" (1929, Hanns Schwarz; a German silent film). . . . ¶ Oct. 29 at 6: "Unforgiven" (1992, Eastwood), with Eastwood, Gene Hackman, Morgan Freeman, and Richard Harris. . . . ¶ Oct. 30 at 2: "From Saturday to Sunday" (1931, Gutav Machaty; in Czech). . . . ¶ Oct. 30 at 2:30: "White Hunter, Black Heart" (†). . . . ¶ Oct. 30 at 5: "Tonka of the Gallows" (1930, Karel Anton; in Czech). . . . ¶ Oct. 30 at 5: "Heartbreak Ridge" (1986, Eastwood), with Eastwood.. . . . ¶ Oct. 31 at 5: "Tightrope" (1984, Richard Tuggle), with Eastwood and Geneviève Bujold. . . . ¶ Nov. 1 at 2:30: "Harakiri" (1919, Fritz Lang; a German silent film, with German intertitles). . . . ¶ Nov. 1 at 6: "Bona" (1980, Lino Brocka; in Tagalog). . . . ¶ Nov. 2 at 2:30: "Caravan" (1934, Erik Charrell), with Charles Boyer and Loretta Young. . . . ¶ Nov. 2 at 6: "Mean Streets" (1973, Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—Oct. 27 at 2 and 6: "Crime and Punishment" (1935, Pierre Chenal; in French), with Harry Baur. . . . ¶ Oct. 27 at 4: "The Idiot" (1946, Georges Lampin; in French), with Edwige Feuillère and Gérard Philipe. . . . ¶ Oct. 27 at 8:15: "The Brothers Karamazov" (1958, Richard Brooks). . . . ¶ Oct. 28 at 2, Oct. 29 at 4, and Oct. 30 at 4:30: "The Brothers Karamazov" (1968, Ivan Pyriev; in Russian). . . . ¶ Oct. 29 at 2 and 7: "Crime and Punishment" (1935, Josef von Sternberg), with Edward Arnold and Peter Lorre. . . . ¶ Oct. 29 at 9, Oct. 30 at 7:15 and 9:30, and Oct. 31 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Dracula" (1930, George Melford; in Spanish, with no subtitles). . . . ¶ Oct. 30-31 at 2: "The Adventures of Baron Munchausen" (1989, Terry Gilliam). . . . ¶ Nov. 1 at 2 and 6: "Martin" (1972, George A. Romero). . . . ¶ Nov. 1 at 4 and 8: "Near Dark" (1987, Kathryn Bigelow). . . . ¶ Nov. 2 at 2 and 6: "The Hunger" (†). . . . ¶ Nov. 2 at 4 and 8: "Daughters of Darkness" (1971, Harry Kümel).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—A retrospective program of the museum's first five years: Oct. 29 at 7:30 and Oct. 30-31 at 2 and 5: Three different programs of works by Ken Jacobs.

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—"The Documentary Films of Frederick Wiseman." Oct. 28 at 6: A conversation with Wiseman. . . . ¶ Oct. 29 at 6: "Hospital" (1970). Mr. Wiseman will be present. . . . ¶ Oct. 30 at 2: "Adjustment and Work" (1987). . . . ¶ Oct. 31 at 2: "Aspen" (1991).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Oct. 27 at 12:30: "Angel and Sinner" (1945, Christian-Jaque; in French), with Micheline Presle and Louis Salou. . . . ¶ Oct. 27 at 3:15: "Mademoiselle Fifi" (†); and "A Day in the Country" (1937, Jean Renoir; in French), with Jeanne Marken, Gabriello, and Sylvia Bataille. . . . ¶ Oct. 27 at 6: "Le Plaisir" (1952, Max Ophuls; in French), with Claude Dauphin, Daniel Gélin, Simone Simon, Madeline Renaud, and Jean Gabin. . . . ¶ Oct. 27 at 8:45: "Guy de Maupassant" (1982, Michel Drach; in French), with Claude Brasseur, Simone Signoret, and Miou-Miou.



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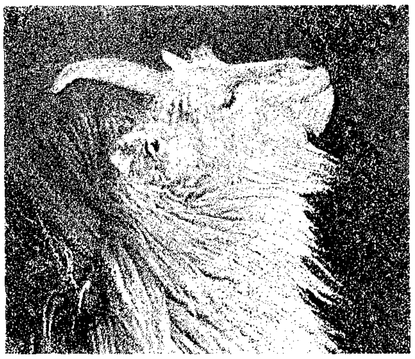
The pure, white cashmere we use takes color brilliantly. Once it's combed and cleaned, the local knitters dye it *before* they spin it into yarn. The result is a richer, truer color – and a sweater that's genuinely colorfast.



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MOVIES IN BRIEF

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

The Architects—A drama, set in East Germany just before the fall of the Berlin Wall, about a young architect who is commissioned to design a government building. Directed by Peter Kahane. In German. Opening October 27.

Black Cat—A Hong Kong waitress (Jade Leung) becomes a C.I.A. assassin. Directed by Stephen Shin. Opening October 29.

Fatal Instinct—A comedy that parodies recent and classic thrillers. With Armand Assante, Kate Nelligan, Sherilyn Fenn, and Sean Young. Directed by Carl Reiner. Opening October 29.

Return of the Living Dead 3—Julie (Mindy Clarke) dies and Curt (J. Trevor Edmond) brings her back to life, with the inevitable consequences. Directed by Brian Yuzna. Opening October 29.

Sex & Zen—The adventures of a Ming-dynasty womanizer (Lawrence Ng), based on Li Yu's novel "The Carnal Prayer Mat." Directed by Michael Mak. In Cantonese. Opening October 29.

A Streetcar Named Desire—The 1951 film, with additional footage that was deemed unsuitable for audiences at the time of its original release. With Vivien Leigh, Marlon Brando, Kim Hunter, and Karl Malden. Directed by Elia Kazan. Opening October 27.

CURRENT FILMS

(The following notes are by Anthony Lane, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow. If a movie has been reviewed in "The Current Cinema," the date of its review is given.)

The Age of Innocence—Martin Scorsese returns to form with this hectic adaptation of Edith Wharton's novel. Everything looks right, from roast duck to waistcoats, but the movie has no ambitions to be a costume museum; it homes in on the passions that had to be veiled by good manners. As the film begins—a showy, overwhelming scene at the opera—we see Newland Archer (Daniel Day-Lewis) about to announce a perfect match with the young May Welland (Winona Ryder). Such perfection is a prison, with no hope of escape, and the vigorous sadness of Day-Lewis tells the whole story; he will never rebel, but in his eyes you see him wishing he could. Less fruitful is the casting of Michelle Pfeiffer as May's older cousin, the mysterious Countess Olenska, with whom Archer falls hopelessly in love. With her silly blond curls, Pfeiffer looks more plaintive than the dark exotic of Wharton's imagination.—A.L. (Reviewed in our issue of 9/13/93.) (Village Theatre VII, Coronet, Orpheum VII, and Ziegfeld.)

A Bronx Tale—Robert De Niro's début as a director. The plot turns on the tussle for a boy's soul: De Niro plays Lorenzo, whose son Calogero is spending too much time with a local hood named Sonny (Chazz Palminteri) and his band of merry men—Tony Toupee, Eddie Mush, and so forth. The tale, set in 1960, was originally written by Palminteri as a five-minute monologue, then grew into a full stage performance before becoming a screenplay; by now it feels tired, and you can't help feeling that the material has already been worked to death onscreen. But Lillo Brancato gives a silky, striking performance as the teen-age Calogero.—A.L. (Village Theatre VII, Beekman, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Cool Runnings—The filmmakers take the adventure of the 1988 Jamaican Olympic bobsled team and turn it into a kiddie movie—almost a toddler movie. Except for a few piquant sports details, they fictionalize everything and play it for easy laughs and melodrama; they even sink to portraying East German bobsledders as racist villains. Leon, Doug E. Doug, Rawle D. Lewis, and Malik Yoba are the teammates; John Candy is their disreputable American coach. Jon Turteltaub directed the script by Lynn Siefert, Tommy Swerdlow, and Michael Goldberg.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, 68th St. Playhouse, Orpheum VII, Olympia, and Embassy. . . . ¶ Murray Hill Cinemas; through Oct. 28.)

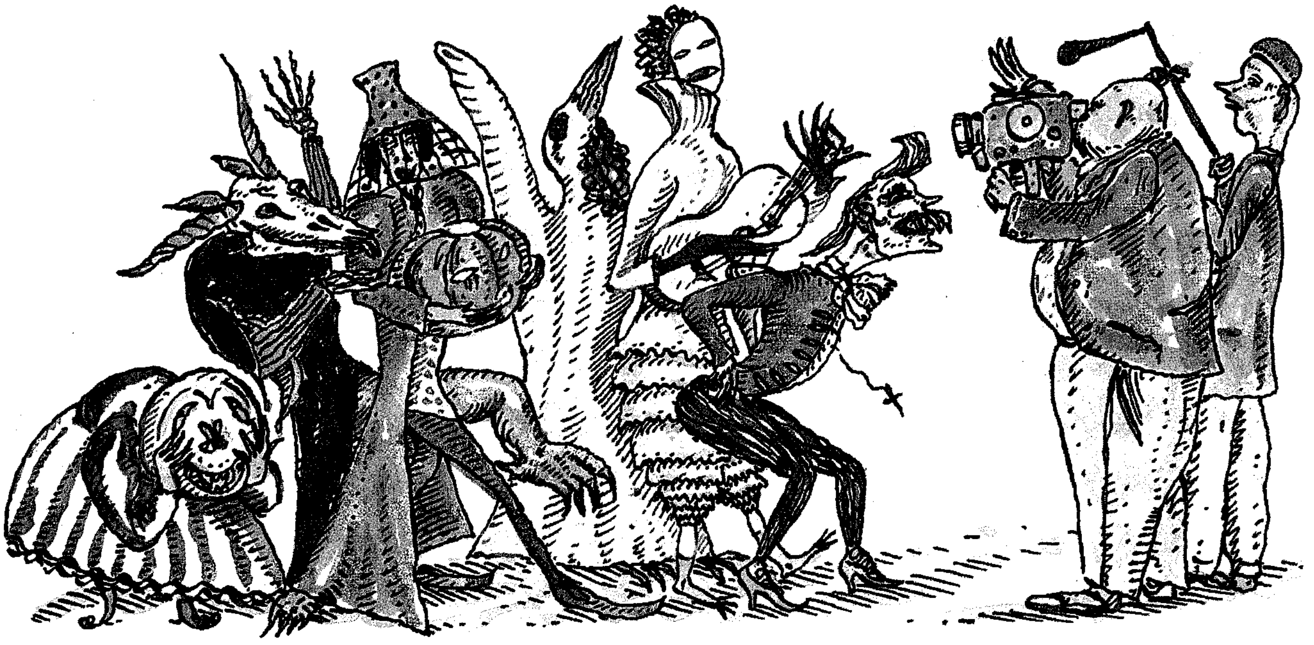
Demolition Man—Woody Allen's "Sleeper" remade as a moronic action spectacle. Supercop Sylvester Stallone and supercrook Wesley Snipes wake up from a cryogenic sleep and do battle in a pacified, PC-fied future, where cussing is banned and lovemaking is a hands-off experience. The script (by Daniel Waters, Robert Reneau, and Peter M. Lenkov) simultaneously mocks and exploits the movie's pre-sold elements, including Stallone's morose brand of machismo. Marco Brambilla directed. With Sandra Bullock and Nigel Hawthorne.—M.S. (Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Farewell My Concubine—Chen Kaige's film is a big, eventful historical soap opera of the "Doctor Zhivago" school—the sort of drama that uses the unsettled emotional lives of a handful of characters to portray the human cost of war and of constant political upheaval. The movie follows a pair of male Beijing Opera performers, Cheng Dieyi (Leslie Cheung) and Duan Xiaolou (Zhang Fengyi), from their school days, in the nineteen-twenties and early thirties, to their farewell performance together, in 1977. Chen keeps the action charging forward breathlessly, for more than two and a half hours, and at a certain point you begin to realize that the obvious theatre-versus-life ironies are only a small part of what the movie is about. The real subject is whether it's possible, in times that demand perpetual revolutions in values, to remain true to anyone or anything: an art, an ideal, a friend, a wife, oneself. In Mandarin.—T.R. (10/11/93) (Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Fearless—The central event in Peter Weir's new movie is the crash of a commercial airliner. Weir knows a metaphor for the fragility of modern man's existence when he sees one, and he seizes on this calamity as if it were something that he had been searching for all his life: an ideal vehicle for the sort of apocalyptic imagery and metaphysical speculation that dominated his early films, like "Picnic at Hanging Rock" (1975) and "The Last Wave" (1977). In terms of imagery and rhythm, this is a stunning piece of filmmaking; it's also a shamelessly florid exercise in therapeutic uplift. Essentially, Weir hijacks a fairly straightforward story about a couple of crash survivors (played by Jeff Bridges and Rosie Perez) and takes it to the Twilight Zone. Also with Isabella Rossellini, John Turturro, and Tom Hulce. Screenplay by Rafael Yglesias, based on his novel.—T.R. (10/25/93) (Tower East. . . . ¶ Chelsea Cinemas; starting Oct. 29.)

It's All True: Based on an Unfinished Film by Orson Welles—A documentary, directed by Richard Wilson. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Film Forum, and 57th St. Playhouse.)

The Joy Luck Club—Amy Tan's 1989 novel is actually a collection of sixteen linked short stories about Chinese immigrant mothers trying to impart their knowledge of life to their Americanized daughters. Unfortunately, Tan and Ronald Bass ("Rain Man"), who wrote



Starting October 29, vampire movies at the Walter Reade Theatre.

EMMANUEL PIERRE

the movie, have attempted to cram all her mini-narratives into the script, diminishing instead of enlarging them. The contemporary scenes of marital discord and generational strife seem pat or trite, while the flashbacks to the mothers' woeful lives in China seem overblown or empty and portentous. Wayne Wang's limp direction is only part of the problem. Tan and Bass rely so heavily on voice-over narration that it sponges up the possibilities for genuine drama and emotion. By the end, the filmmakers just about beg for tears.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema II, 86th Street East Twin, Guild, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

Malice—Andy Safian (Bill Pullman) married his favorite student, Tracy (Nicole Kidman), and they now live peacefully in a quiet college town—so quiet that you can hear rape and murder just waiting round the corner. After the ghastly deeds are done, Andy becomes a suspect, but, worse than that, he opens his doors to a big bad lodger—Jed Hill (Alec Baldwin), surgeon and stud. The director, Harold Becker, working from a script by Aaron Sorkin and Scott Frank, piles on the twists, and his photographer, Gordon Willis, wraps the action in immaculately tailored shadows, but they can't disguise its essential silliness. Unlike Becker's best movie, "Sea of Love," this one never feels driven or desperate, just a bit glum. Thankfully, Alec Baldwin refuses to give up, and in the second half he grabs the movie and turns it into high hokum. Who knows? Half an hour shorter and made for half the money, the whole thing could have been a gas.—A.L. (10/18/93) (Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and National Twin.)

M. Butterfly—David Cronenberg's movie version of the acclaimed play by David Henry Hwang strips the work of its Brechtian theatricality and its heavily sarcastic (and politically correct) one-liners, but what's left after all this prudent streamlining still doesn't add up to much. The main characters are René Gallimard (Jeremy Irons), a French diplomat posted to China, and Song Liling (John Lone), a Beijing Opera actor who impersonates a woman in real life as well as on the stage; in a nearly twenty-year affair with Song, Gallimard never figures out that his lover is a man. For Hwang, this absurd romance is more than a hilarious illustration of the axiom that love is blind (or, in this case, utterly insensate); it's emblematic of imperialistic Western attitudes toward the East and of men's desire for submissive women. Cronenberg's dispirited treatment of the material has the effect of exposing it, inadvertently, for what it really is: not a pure, incandescent work of art but an extremely ordinary piece of agitprop drama. Also with Barbara Sukowa and Ian Richardson.—T.R. (10/11/93) (Village Theatre VII, and First & 62nd Cinemas.)

Mr. Jones—The last time Richard Gere teamed up with the British director Mike Figgis, it went like a dream, albeit a scary one: they made the gripping "Internal Affairs," with Gere looking like a fetish object in his cop uniform. Now the magic is gone; he plays Mr. Jones—the man from nowhere, with his mind out of whack. He does crazy things—balancing on a roof beam, pushing aside a symphony conductor in the middle of a concert and trying to lead the orchestra himself—and is handed over for treatment to a psychiatrist (Lena Olin). You can feel a love affair coming, but it takes a long time, and then passes by; the rest of the movie is one long brood. As with "The Fisher King" or "Benny & Joon," there's something deeply insulting in the idea that mental instability is worth treasuring because it shakes the world up and gives the rest of us a buzz. The more fun Gere has with the part, the more it makes you wince.—A.L. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Metro Cinema. . . . ¶ Criterion Center; through Oct. 28.)

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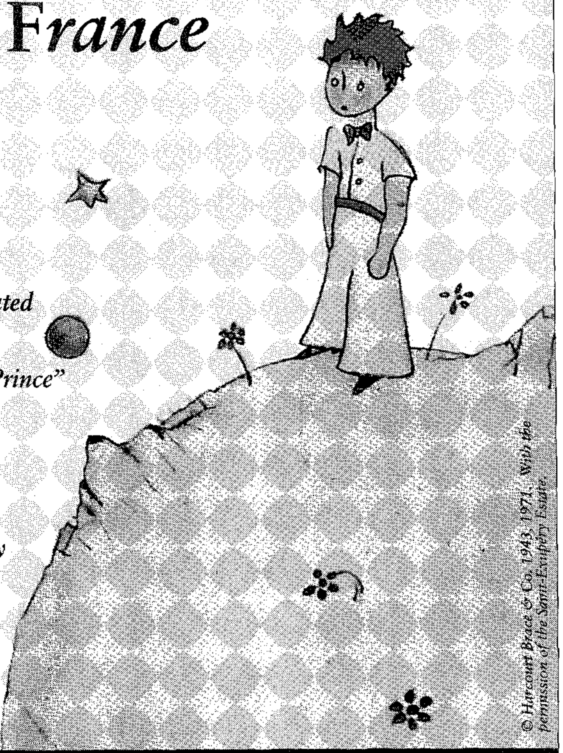

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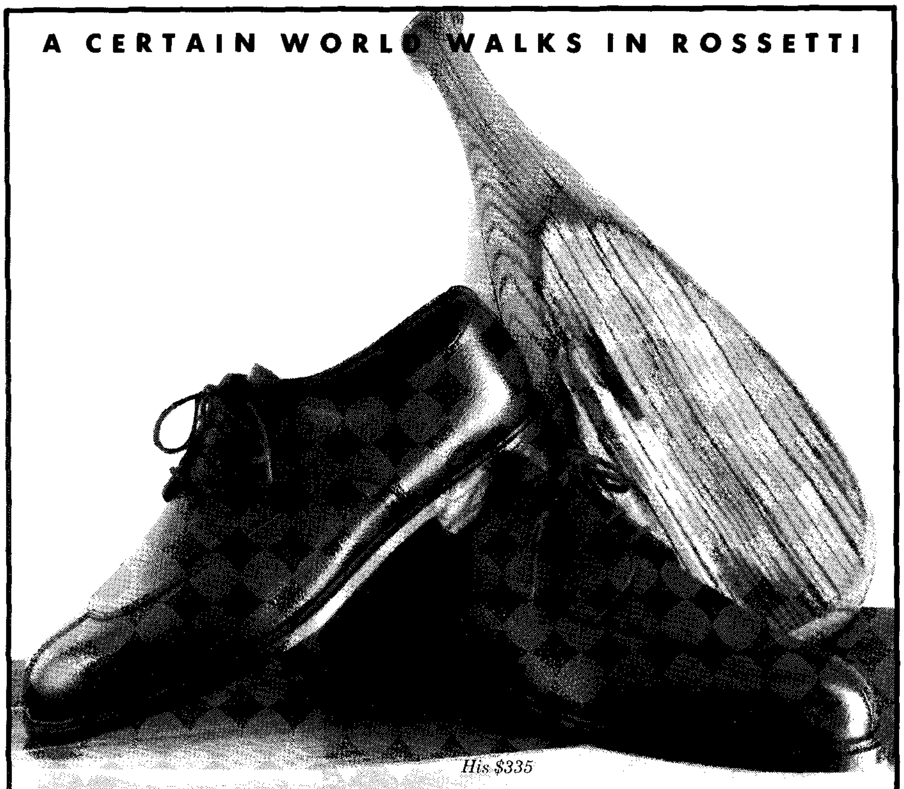

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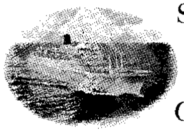

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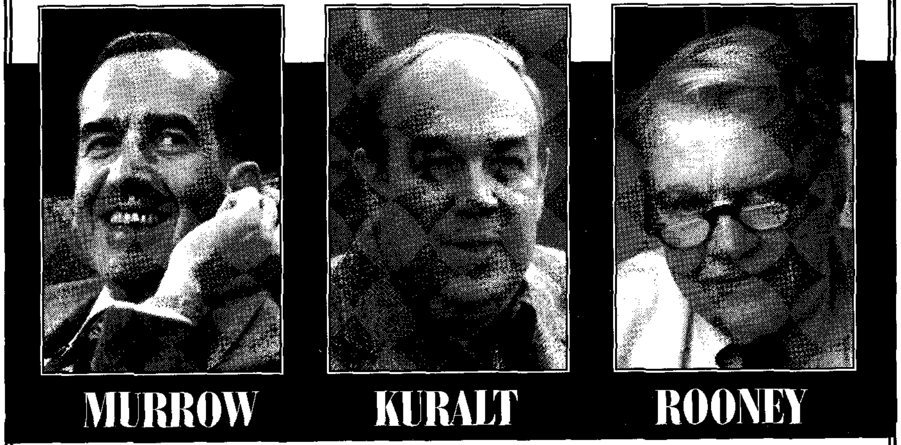

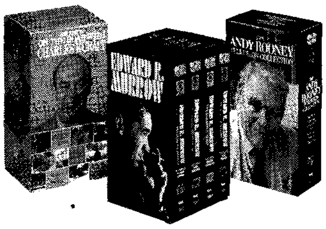

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IN BRIEF–Cont'd

Mr. Wonderful—*In this all too wispy romantic* comedy-drama, Matt Dillon plays a New York City Con Ed worker who sets out to find a husband for his ex-wife (Annabella Sciorra); if he succeeds, he'll invest his alimony budget in a bowling alley. The director, Anthony Minghella, imports British class consciousness to the United States—even if the central rift here is between literature class and shop class. He and his Yank screenwriters (Amy Schor and Vicki Polon) overplay the gap between Dillon, a neighborhood-bound Mr. Fixit, and Sciorra, who wants to get a liberal-arts education and break away. You don't see what they share, and you don't root for them to reunite. Only when Sciorra dates a romantic pharmacist deftly played by Vincent D'Onofrio does the movie become as magical as Minghella's "Truly, Madly, Deeply." With Mary-Louise Parker and William Hurt.—M.S. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Columbus Circle.)

Ruby in Paradise—Ruby Lee Gissing (Ashley Judd) flees to Florida in search of a new life and finds it in Panama City Beach. There she sells T-shirts and trinkets, and yields to the advances of the loathsome Ricky (Bentley Mitchum) and the well-read Mike (Todd Field). Judd is a fine blend of pushy and graceful, but Victor Nuñez's script and direction leave her beached. If you like off-season resorts, leaden voice-overs ("Where does caring come from?"), and movies that never seem to end, this one's for you.—A.L. (Angelika Film Center, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Rudy—Knute Rockne Stadium is the football field of dreams in this relentlessly inspirational sports story, based on a real person. Sean Astin plays Rudy Ruettiger, a dyslexic working-class Catholic boy who becomes one of Notre Dame's Fighting Irish on heart and guts alone. Unless viewers share Rudy's Notre Dame mania, they'll find the uplift grinding—like the myth of Sisyphus with a happy ending. David Anspaugh directed Angelo Pizzo's script. With Ned Beatty, Charles S. Dutton, Lili Taylor, and Robert Prosky.—M.S. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Gemini, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Short Cuts—In this wildly ambitious picture, Robert Altman uses nine short stories by Raymond Carver as the raw material for a latter-day "Nashville," set in Southern California. (One story line—by far the weakest—is the invention of Altman and his co-screenwriter, Frank Barhydt.) Most of the stories in the three-hour-and-seven-minute movie are about misunderstandings—often outright hostilities—between men and women, and the juxtaposition of all these poisonous domestic relationships has the effect of turning Carver's closely observed, scrupulously specific small dramas into a big, obvious generalization about men's brutality and women's capacity for endurance. Despite Altman's exquisite control of pace, the movie seems thin and insubstantial, and every moment feels pretty much like every other. The filmmaker hovers above his characters, spraying them with significance, and rarely touches down; he has to work too hard to maintain his overview, and, finally, the correspondences he wants us to see from up there start to look contrived, illusory. Of the twenty-two principal actors, a handful do terrific work here: Jack Lemmon, Bruce Davison, Julianne Moore, Lily Tomlin, Jennifer Jason Leigh, and Madeleine Stowe.—T.R. (9/27/93) (Cinema I, and Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas—This full-length animated movie was shot in stop motion, with all the febrile, twittery fascination that the medium exerts; it has a magic-toyshop feeling, with unexpected objects stuttering into life. Directed by Henry Selick, it was devised and co-produced by Tim Burton, who leaves a trail of his familiar obsessions: graveyard humor, whirling snow, a velvety darkness. But the atmosphere is too rich for the pallid plot: Jack Skellington, the bony master of ceremonies in Halloweentown, discovers the spirit of Christmas and tries to import it into his ghoulish world. The clash of styles—demonic vs. cute—pays off only toward the end; for all the witty, festering details (look out for the cat that howls like a siren when you crank its tail), the film is strangely static. Danny Elfman's score is lush and shocking but much too good for his lyrics (or for what you can hear of them). Children may find it too black and baffling; adults with nervous dispositions should be nicely freaked out.—A.L. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 1.)

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow.)

D.O.A. (1949)—The melodrama gears up immediately as the antihero (Edmond O'Brien) stumbles into a police station and reports his own imminent death. He's been poisoned with a "luminous" toxin that glows in the dark—a hard-to-resist movie gimmick. O'Brien tells the cops how he got dosed during a fling in San Francisco and how he tracked the will-be murderers. This B movie has more pungency than most A movies. The director, Rudolph Maté—who was the cinematographer on Carl Dreyer's "Vampyr"—allows aberrant life to seep into the low-budget, high-concept production. Photographed by Ernest Laszlo, it unfolds in grungy, clammy black-and-white. The look suits the story's lived-in cynicism, as American as day-old apple pie.—M.S. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Oct. 27.)

The Hunger (1983)—The director, Tony Scott, develops so many trashy, flashy ways to illustrate his premise that he doesn't leave any room to tell a story. Catherine Deneuve is an Egyptian vampire who mates with David Bowie for three centuries. According to some demonological biocycle, he becomes disgustingly old, and she must find a new partner. Deneuve's prey is Susan Sarandon—an expert on aging! Complete with a gauzy lesbian love scene, the movie is laughably chichi.—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; Nov. 2.)

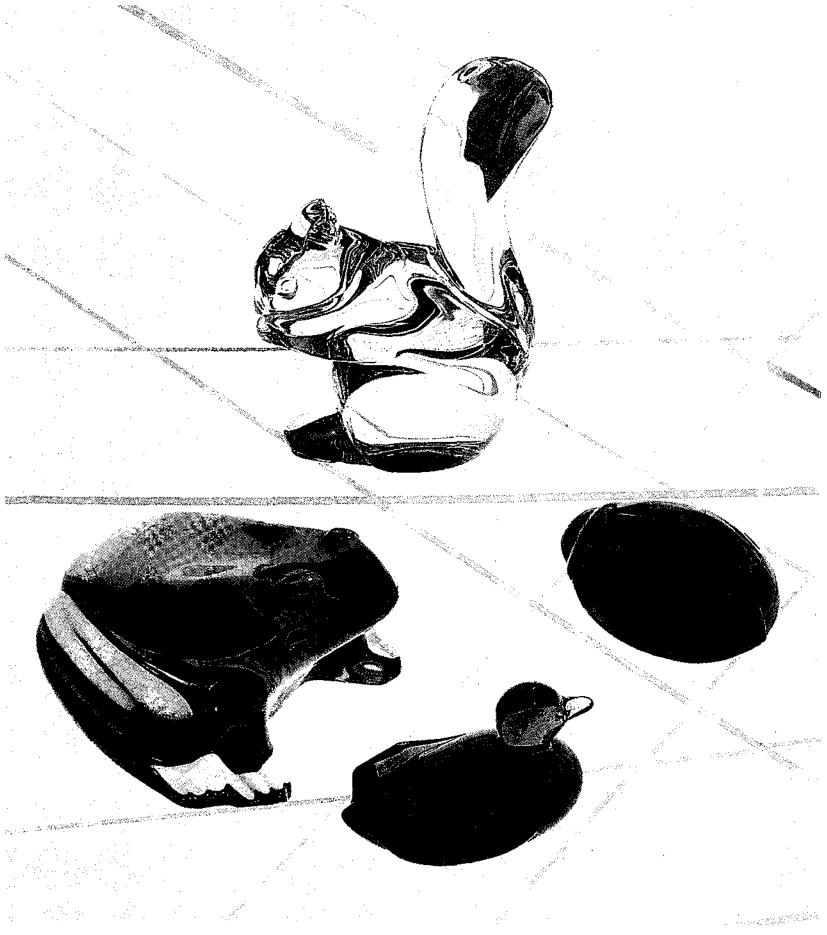
I Love You, Alice B. Toklas! (1968)—A giddy, slapdash, entertainingly inconsequential comedy, written by Paul Mazursky and Larry Tucker, and starring Peter Sellers as a Los Angeles Jewish lawyer who turns hippie. With Joyce Van Patten as his anxious fiancée, and Leigh Taylor-Young, Jo Van Fleet, David Arkin, Herbert Edelman, Salem Ludwig, Edra Gale, Lou Gottlieb, and Grady Sutton. The picture makes you laugh surprisingly often. Directed by Hy Averback.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Oct. 28.)

Island of Lost Souls (1933)—A tight, gruesome shocker, featuring Karl Struss's spooky cinematography and Charles Laughton's creepy portrayal of the mad vivisector Dr. Moreau, who conducts pseudo-anthropological experiments on beasts he imports to his own tropical island. This villain's God complex dwarfs Alec Baldwin's in "Malice": he transforms animals into humanoids and tries to mate a gentleman (Richard Arlen) with a panther-woman. Laughton takes hubris and voyeurism to Olympian heights and Stygian depths. Bela Lugosi, as the mutants' Sayer of the Law, asks the recurring question "Are we not men?"—which became the signature line of the rock group Devo. The name of the rap group House of Pain also comes from this movie, as does the concept of the pig-man in a recent episode of "Seinfeld." Erle C. Kenton directed the Waldemar Young–Philip Wylie adaptation of the H. G. Wells novel, "The Island of Dr. Moreau."—M.S. (Thalia; Oct. 31-Nov. 1.)

Mademoiselle Fifi (1944)—This modest Val Lewton costume drama, directed by Robert Wise, is a propaganda film with a gallant spirit. The screenwriters, Josef Mischel and Peter Ruric, cobble together two Guy de Maupassant stories (the title tale and "Boule de Suif"), creating a parable of the French Resistance. Simone Simon is touching as a laundress whose patriotism clashes with the pragmatism of nobleman, bourgeois, and revolutionary alike during a stagecoach trip through Prussian-occupied France in 1870. The other passengers include Jason Robards, Sr., and Alan Napier; Kurt Kreuger plays the rabid invading officer ironically nicknamed Mademoiselle Fifi. The cinematographer, Harry Wild, deserves credit for much of the film's wintry ambience.—M.S. (Florence Gould Hall; Oct. 27.)

White Hunter, Black Heart (1990)—Clint Eastwood is calamitous as the John Huston-inspired director at the center of Peter Viertel's extraordinary roman à clef about the making of "The African Queen," adapted by Viertel himself (with James Bridges and Burt Kennedy) and directed, flatly, by Eastwood. In a vain attempt to grasp Huston's hellbent expansiveness, Eastwood clumsily apes the man's outsize gestures and vocal mannerisms—the way he made his courtly poses both ominous and charming, and swelled syllables into words. It's the most agonizing sort of acting: you can see what Eastwood's driving at, and how unequipped he is to get there. Jeff Fahey is ineffectual as Viertel's surrogate, the writer trying to polish the script while the director grows obsessed with shooting an elephant.—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; Oct. 30.)

The Wild Angels (1966)—A crude A.I.P. wheeler that was aimed at the drive-in and male-loner audience but wound up reaching so large an international audience that the major studios began to imitate it. It's loaded with pot-smoking, orgies, rumbles, and whatever else the producer-director, Roger Corman, and his scenarist, Charles B. Griffith, could work in. Their big number is set in a chapel at a funeral service for a member of a motorcycle gang—Loser (played by Bruce Dern), who was hooked on Nazi insignia. Loser's buddies tie up the minister, rape the young widow, and take the body from its coffin in order to wrap it in a Nazi flag. Corman and Griffith seem to know only one way to entertain an audience: by sensationalism. And it's a very square idea of sensationalism—you're supposed to be thrilled by each demonstration of how gross and violent the gang members are. (There's a good moment, though, when Loser, dying, asks, "Anybody got a straight cigarette?") With Peter Fonda as Heavenly Blues, Nancy Sinatra as Mike, Michael J. Pollard as Pigmy, and Diane Ladd and Gayle Hunnicutt. Edited by Monte Hellman.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Oct. 28.)



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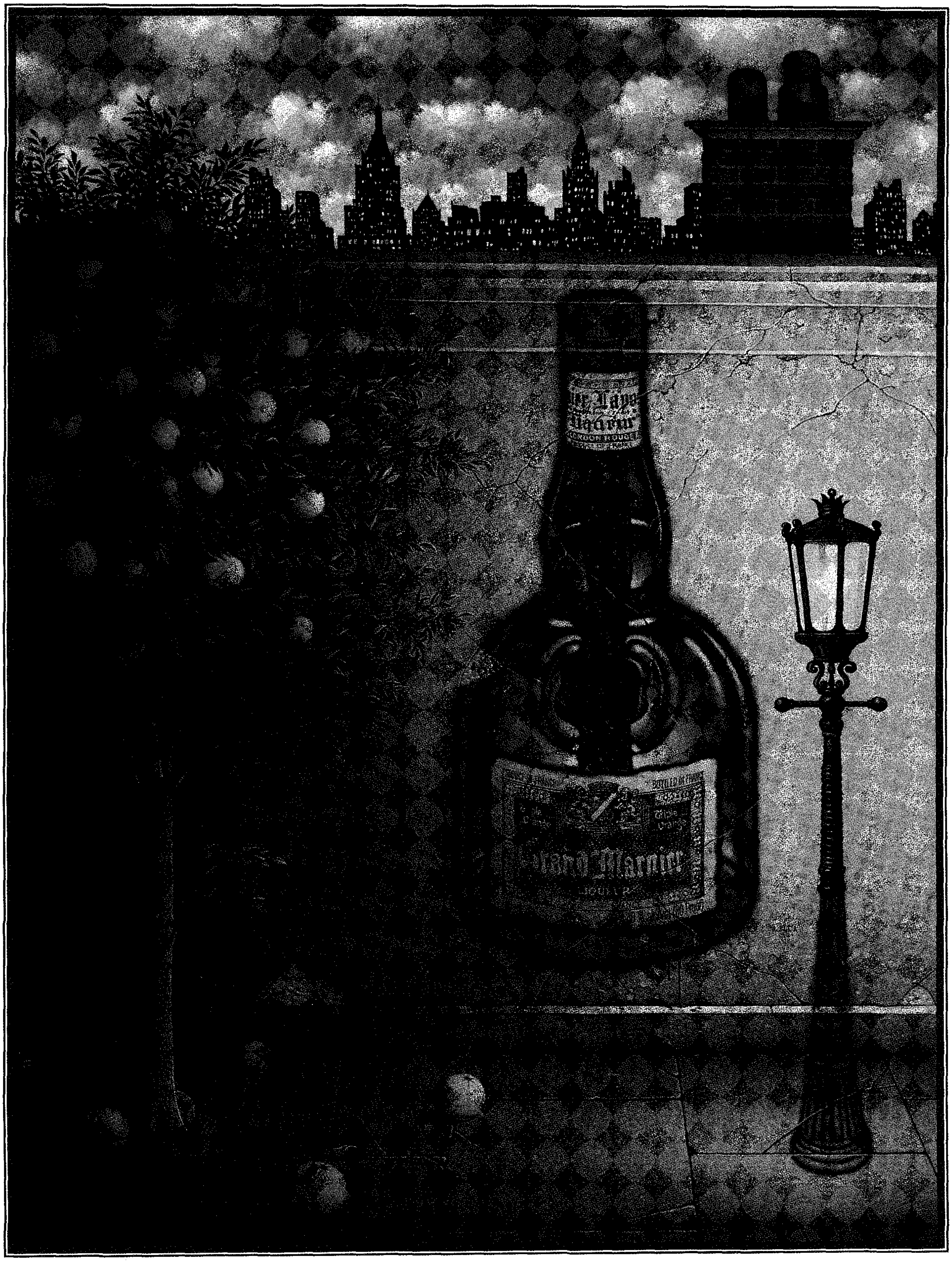

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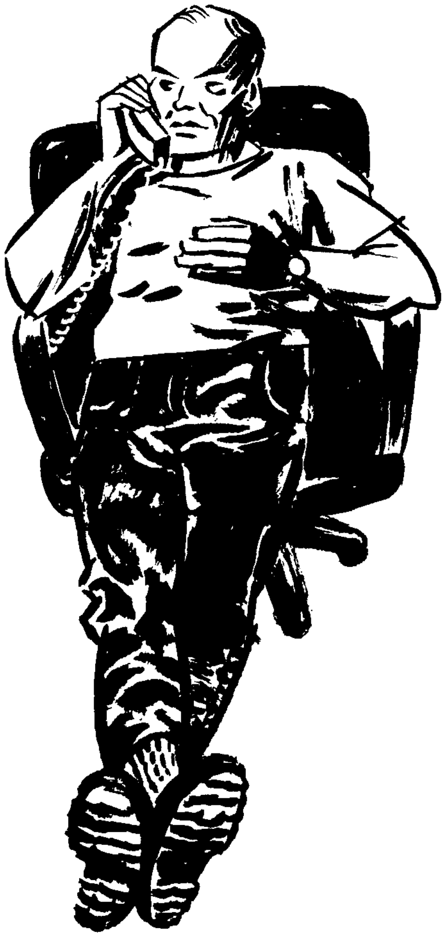
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

JAMES CARVILLE IS STILL SPINNING

Two weeks ago, we took a rain-swept train ride out to Edison, New Jersey, where Governor Jim Florio has his election headquarters, and invited James Carville, the Governor's chief campaign consultant, to give us a spin. Carville, who is widely credited with bringing combativeness and discipline to Bill Clinton's Presidential campaign, has, in the past few months, helped engineer a remarkable comeback for the Governor. Virtually left for dead in 1990, after he pushed through a $2.8-billion tax increase, Florio now, according to the polls, seems poised to gain reëlection. It was midmorning when we reached Carville's office, and he'd already been having some good, clean fun. He had called up New Jersey 101.5, a generally anti-Florio radio station, to ask, in a transparently mock-innocent style, why it was that the Governor's Republican opponent, Christine Todd Whitman, had released her tax returns for 1989 and 1991 but not for 1990, a year in which she spent several months as a local office-holder.

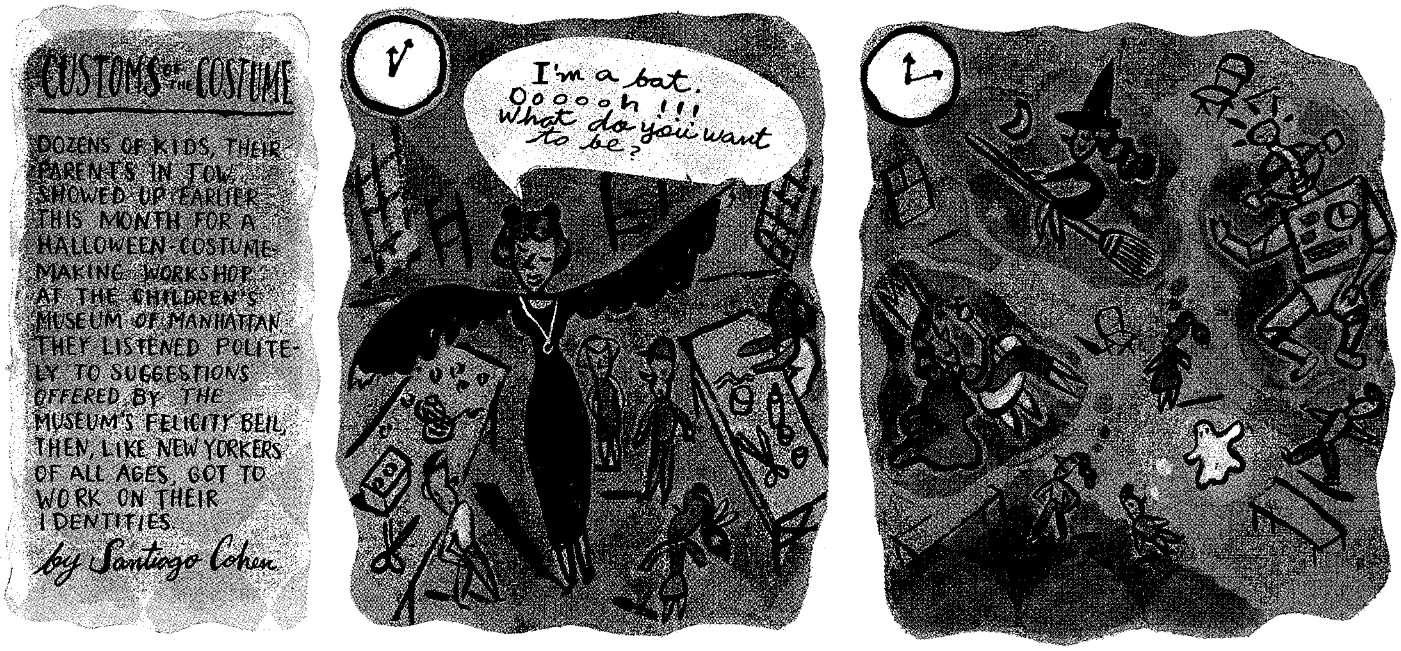
Wearing his signature T-shirt, jeans, and sneakers, and seated at a round table, Carville got to work spinning us straightaway. "It's *amazingly* poor political judgment to say, 'I'll do '89 and '91 but not '90,' " he declared, in the Cajun drawl that helps him to convey sincere conviction and playful irony in the same breath. Later that day, Florio was to hold a press conference in which he would hammer away at this less than crucial issue, and Carville now had at his elbow a stack of placards that the Governor would be using as visual aids. "This one here is my favorite," he said, holding up the topmost card and adjusting his oddly donnish glasses on the bridge of his nose. It was a quotation from Whitman herself: "Full disclosure of income and assets should be a basic requirement of anyone seeking or serving in public office." " 'Seeking or serving,' " Carville said. "I *like* that."

Thanks largely to Bill Clinton's victory a year ago, Carville has become a political celebrity; his very presence in the New Jersey campaign has assured the statewide race national attention. But it is also true that New Jersey is regarded as a bellwether state. Florio, a moderate Democrat who has raised taxes, has been cast by Washington insiders of both parties as a kind of stand-in for President Clinton, and the race is thus being scrutinized for auguries of 1996. If the signs remain unclear, it may be because the Florio campaign has so far consisted largely of cramming Whitman's inopportune words down her throat—an indelicate procedure that Carville has mastered. When, for example, Whitman sardonically observed that Florio's proposal to deny welfare benefits to women who fail to identify their children's fathers was so harsh that he might soon be herding such women into "relocation" camps with badges and tattoos, the Florio campaign quickly assembled a group of Holocaust survivors who expressed outrage that their experience should be unfeelingly compared to that of women having children out of wedlock.



"I don't want to take credit for that," Carville said, with a laugh that implied the opposite. Nor does he accept the notion that such tactics amount to negative campaigning. "Is it negative to say that your opponent has a position on something that's different from yours?" he asked. "I don't think so. Political campaigns ought to be about differences and distinctions." (Of course, Whitman's hesitation in releasing her 1990 tax returns scarcely constituted a "position," and when she finally released the information, on October 15th, the Florio campaign was forced to concede that she had nothing to hide.) Carville prefers to call this kind of campaigning "aggressive"—an instance of the art of spinning

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID MAZZUCCHELLI


CUSTOMS OF THE COSTUME
DOZENS OF KIDS, THEIR PARENTS IN TOW, SHOWED UP EARLIER THIS MONTH FOR A HALLOWEEN-COSTUME-MAKING WORKSHOP AT THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM OF MANHATTAN. THEY LISTENED POLITELY TO SUGGESTIONS OFFERED BY THE MUSEUM'S FELICITY BEIL, THEN, LIKE NEW YORKERS OF ALL AGES, GOT TO WORK ON THEIR IDENTITIES.
by Santiago Cohen
I'm a bat. Ooooooh!!! What do you want to be?

as practiced on the art of spinning.

Carville says that the country needs more politics, not less. Over the last generation, he asserted, the political discussion, especially inside the Democratic Party, has been dominated by "social élites" who disdain the messy scrimmaging of politics and barely notice the concerns of ordinary voters. "The opinion-makers have no foggy idea," he said. "They'd rather talk about *arts funding*."

Carville explained that he made this discovery ten years ago, when, as a thirty-eight-year-old nonpracticing lawyer, he landed a job as a low-paid functionary in Gary Hart's Presidential campaign. "They were talking about, like, you know, *Atari* Democrats," he said. "They would have these discussions, and I would just kind of sit there thinking, Damn, it's not like nothing *I* ever talked to anybody about." Carville recalled one Hart adviser who spoke through his pipe—a process he imitated for us by placing both hands over his mouth and making suction noises. "He'd say, 'We got a' "—drag—" 'problem' "—drag—" 'that we gotta' "—drag—" 'identify. Now, what exactly is our problem?' And I wanted to scream out, 'Hey, we're not gettin' enough votes!' "

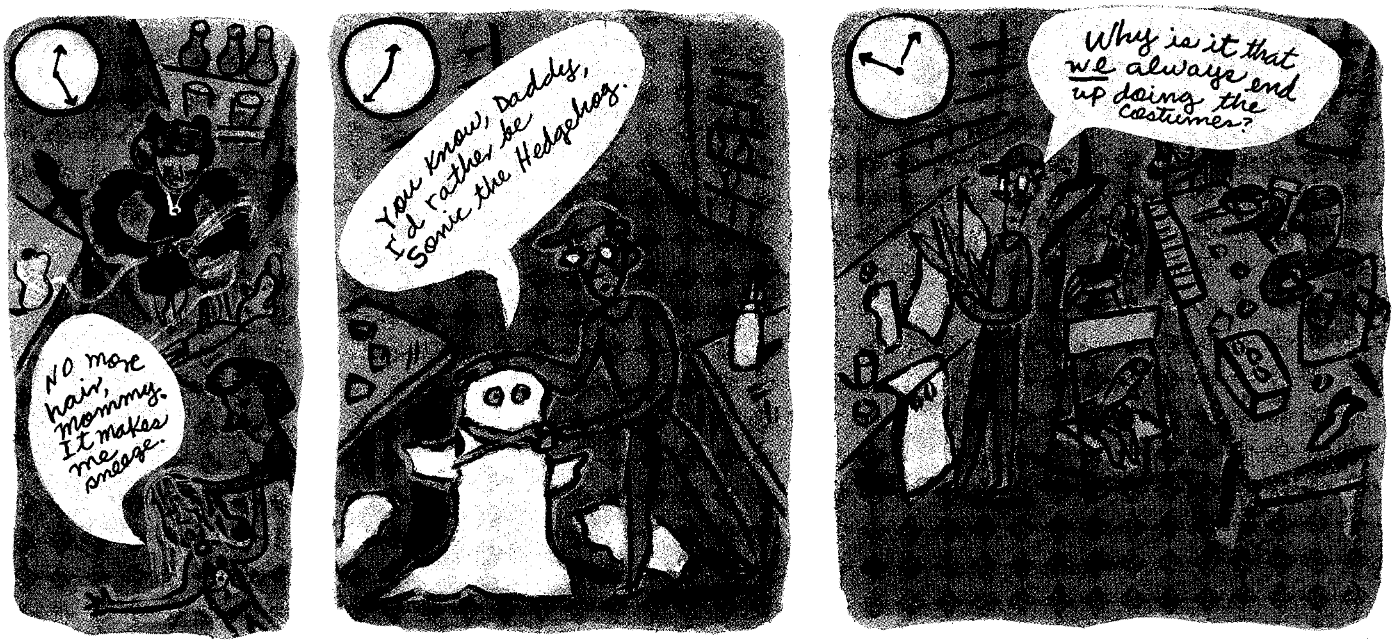
Carville was now deep in his theoretical mode. Democrats like Hart or Michael Dukakis, he said, represent a wing of the Party which is preoccupied with "social issues," like abortion and gay rights. The competing tradition, as he understands it, is that of "the economic populists," who speak for working-class and middle-class economic aspiration, and either soft-pedal divisive social issues or sympathize with working-class and middle-class resentment of or impatience with them. The Republicans, for their part, are, to Carville's mind, divided between "social populists" and "economic élites." Democrats, he said, can beat either with economic populism.

Florio seems to offer as much evidence for this thesis as President Clinton. As a *Wall Street Journal* editorial recently lamented, the Governor has managed to outflank his Republican opponent to the *right* on issues of welfare and public safety. Florio also appears to have persuaded the majority of voters in New Jersey that a big tax increase was necessary in order to balance the state's budget without having to make drastic cuts—which is what Clinton hopes most voters in 1996 will think about *his* tax increases. Not that Florio has made his tax rise the centerpiece of his campaign: he rarely mentions it, and there are no signs in Florio's campaign headquarters saying "It's the economy, stupid"—the phrase that Carville coined. Carville coyly explained that voters require no further education on the subject of the tax increase—in contrast to, say, the subject of Whitman's reservations about the Governor's tough (and popular) gun-control legislation. "We'll keep talking about that until we reach the *saturation* level," Carville said, cocking his head and forming a sly, puckish grin.

The puckishness notwithstanding, Carville is a possessed soul, a tenacious know-it-all with a heart of glass, like Jack Burden in "All the King's Men." In "The War Room," a documentary of the Clinton campaign that had its première at the New York Film Festival, Carville is ceaselessly, tirelessly browbeating and wheedling and sweet-talking, all the while searching his listeners' faces for signs of conversion. By the end of the campaign, Carville looks as numb and spent as a Channel swimmer, and in a closing speech he breaks down in sobs. And near the end of our chat with him he said, apropos of nothing, "I don't know how much longer after this race I'm going to do this," and appeared to be saying it not for—well, spin.

Carville is getting married, on Thanksgiving Day, to his Republican alter ego, Mary Matalin, and at forty-eight he has just bought his first house and his first car. He said he is thinking that it might be nice to have a life. "Just in the last few months, I've been through too many time zones and too many tracking polls," he told us. He worries that he's got "a step slower," and he finds himself contemplating the idea of a leisurely lunch.

But all this is for another day. "Once I'm in it," he assured us, "it's—whooo!" A few minutes later, he abruptly heaved himself up from his chair, said "Thanks, man," and was out of the room before we'd closed our notebook.


NO more hair, mommy. It makes me sneeze.
You know, Daddy, I'd rather be Sonic the Hedgehog.
Why is it that we always end up doing the costumes?

CALL IT LUXEMBOURGIAN

So here's the problem. Your country, Luxembourg, is a prosperous banking center with a richly tapestried history stretching back to the year 963. But your country—once again, that's *Luxembourg*—is also tinier than Rhode Island and hasn't really hit the news since the Battle of the Bulge. In short, no one knows where it is. "There is very often a mixup with Liechtenstein or Monaco," Luxembourg's Prince Henri admitted to us recently. The Prince, a slim man with green eyes and a soft, cultivated voice, was in New York to open Luxembourg House, the country's new United Nations Mission and, it must be said, its bold P.R. gambit to raise Luxembourg's visibility.

The hook here is that Luxembourg's five-story town house, on Beekman Place, was for more than forty years Irving Berlin's home. Berlin based his 1950 Broadway musical, "Call Me Madam," on Harry Truman's appointment of Perle Mesta as Ambassador to Luxembourg. These facts, familiar to every American schoolchild, underpinned the climax of Luxembourg House's brief, cheerful, sparsely attended christening: Prince Henri's unveiling of a marble plaque solemnizing Berlin's years in the house. "While you're here visiting Irving Berlin's house," the Prince suggested, tossing the new pitch rather doubtfully, "come in to our office of economic development, and we will discuss possible investments, or tourism—we have more than a hundred impressive medieval castles."

"You could hire a castle for a wedding," Luxembourg's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jacques Poos, chimed in. "For ten thousand Luxembourg francs—three hundred dollars. It's a very good price."

We wondered aloud if they had considered publicizing themselves the old-fashioned way, with parties so raucous they shake the foundations of diplomatic immunity.

Prince Henri allowed himself a moment of subdued mirth. "We are not that kind of— Luxembourgers are more quiet people—"

"Not like the Italians," Mr. Poos interjected.

"We are Nordics," Prince Henri said. "We are more low-key. It is more efficient to go through in a quiet way."

"When I was first in New York, as a journalist, twenty-five years ago," Mr. Poos recalled enthusiastically, "I took the Circle Line, and I still remember the speaker saying, 'Look at your left: there, in this house, lives Irving Berlin.' I could imagine that now they say, 'This was the house of Irving Berlin. It's become the Luxembourg Mission to the United Nations.' "

We called Chris Calhoun, the operations manager of Circle Line Sightseeing, to check how much heat was radiating from the Berlin-Luxembourg synergy. Apparently, not much. Not much *yet*. "I don't think we mention Irving Berlin anymore, to be honest," Mr. Calhoun said. "It's not a highlight of the trip. But if we get a mailing from the Luxembourg people I will certainly incorporate their news in our guides' script for next season. We like to be current with what's happening."

GOODFELLA

It was over at the federal courthouse in Brooklyn the other day that Jerry Capeci, of the *News*, got what seemed like a bum rap. Here he is on the stand, right? It's Bruce Cutler's trial—they're trying to say Cutler violated a gag order during John Gotti's trial in '91 when he was talking up Gotti outside the courthouse, in a way that influenced the jurors. Cutler's people, they've got Capeci up there, saying, in so many words, that you can't say much about Gotti that your average juror wouldn't already know. And it's going *bada-bing-bada-boom*, when all of a sudden the judge, he gestures to Capeci and he says, "He's a *newspaper* reporter. He's not an expert on organized crime," just like that. This is how the judge was talking to Jerry Capeci: the guy who writes "Gang Land," the city's No. 1 mob column; the guy who has actually been threatened on secret F.B.I. tapes by actual wiseguys; the guy who, back in the winter of 1985, broke the story about exactly why Gotti had Paul Castellano whacked while the F.B.I. was still figuring out who made the appointment for whom. This is not how you talk to Jerry Capeci; talking like this to Jerry Capeci is like spitting in church, or walking up to John Gotti, poking your finger in his chest, and calling him a punk. It is not something that you do.

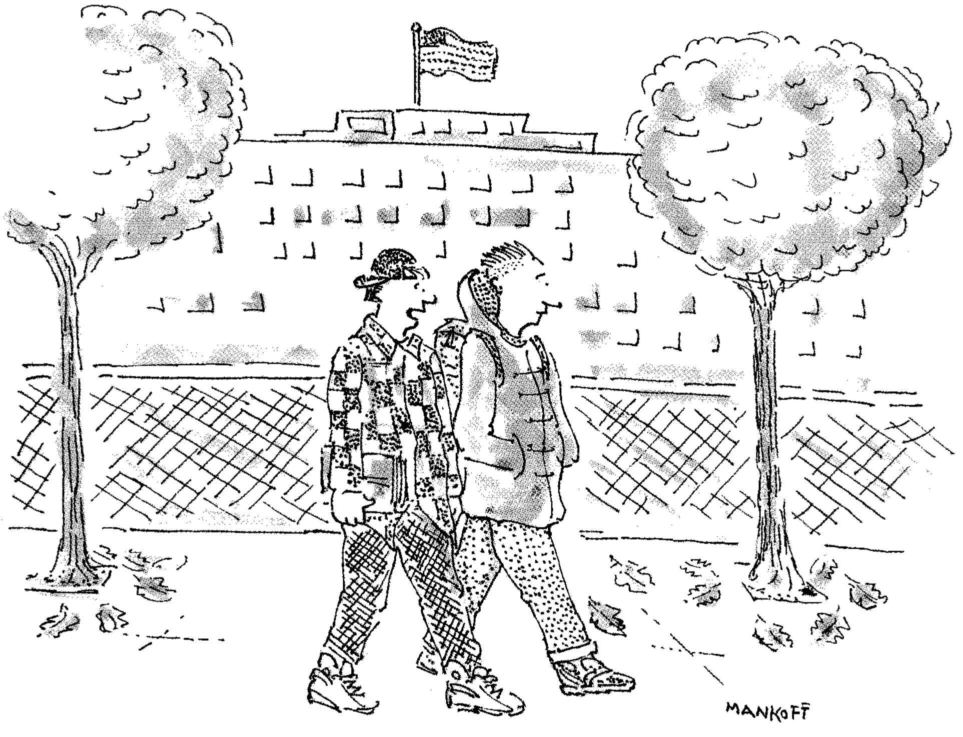
Capeci, it turns out, doesn't care what the judge says, since Cutler and other people whose names often appear in statements with the word "reputed" think he's just about as expert as you can get without being an actual member of a reputed crime family. "I call that pretty, pretty good bona fides," Capeci said a few days after his courthouse appearance, sitting over coffee in a place near the *News* offices, on East Forty-second Street. He is forty-nine years old, has a good guy's street looks, and was wearing a tweed sports coat, an open-collar dress shirt, and jeans. Right at the start, he set the terms of the interview. He said, "I will ask you to edit me, because I talk sometimes like a guy from Brooklyn, which is basically what I am."

Capeci was born in Bensonhurst, and after high school got a job as a copyboy at the *Post*. He went on to work in makeup and to do some editing before landing his first reporting job—covering cops, then the courts. He left the *Post* for the *News* in 1986, continued to cover the courts, and also covered the crime beat. He has been writing his "Gang Land" column, published every Tuesday, for the past four years.

"Gang Land" is a weekly roundup of the world of organized crime, and, like its author, it has a shoot-from-the-hip attitude; Capeci is as apt to take a shot at a local district attorney as he is to dress down a Gambino soldier. A while back, he took a judge by the collar when the judge allowed three co-defendants of Salvatore (Sally Dogs) Lombardi out on bail but left Rita Bologna, Sally's wife, in jail. ("The judge . . . seems to be pitching particularly high hard ones," Capeci wrote.) When Carmine (Junior) Persico wrote to Capeci from prison, where he's serving a hundred-year sentence, to dispute a "Gang Land" fact—"You inaccurately associated my name with the Anastasia assassination," Persico claimed—Capeci went back to the tapes to nail him: Persico, Capeci wrote, "left out that the informer . . . described Persico thumping his chest and saying, 'The FBI knows who really hurt Anastasia, but that fag Crazy Joe Gallo took the credit.' " Some of the best moments in "Gang Land," though, come when Capeci provides a slice-of-life family story. Not long ago, for instance, he recounted the story of three Philadelphia mobsters who had a body in the trunk of their car and were on their way to dispose of it somewhere in New Jersey but got stuck in the exact-change lane on the Walt Whitman Bridge without exact change.

The way Capeci gets most of the goods he gets is by going to court—chatting up wiseguys in the halls and listening to tapes hour after hour. These days, he is busy covering a flurry of cases that have come about since Salvatore (Sammy Bull) Gravano began to sing. "There's a lot in the pipeline," Capeci said, and he ticked off a list of upcoming cases that included Vincent (the Chin) Gigante, Anthony (Gaspipe) Casso, the Lucchese family, and Teamsters Local No. 282. The talk in the organized-crime community right now, he revealed, revolves mostly around the next move by John Gotti, imprisoned for life but still the head of the Gambino crime family. "The question is: Will he do the right thing?" Capeci explained. "Will he give up the reins peacefully? Because he cannot, under Mafia rules, be deposed. He has to step down or die. My guess is that he's gonna want to maintain control after all he did to get there."

Finishing his coffee, Capeci told the story he dines out on, even for coffee. In 1989, during one of Gotti's pretrial hearings, he got a midnight call from Bruce Cutler; Capeci's wife and three kids were asleep, but he himself, a night bird, was still awake. "Cutler said, 'Jerry, my client is upset with what you wrote about him today.' And I said, 'What'd he say?' He said, 'You're destroying my client's right to a fair trial, and my client—this is not a threat, mind you—my client, you know, he said he'd like to kick you in the ass for what you're doing.' And I said, 'Give me a break, Bruce! The *Post* had the same story.' And that's when he uttered his famous quote. He says, 'But Jerry! You're not the *Post*. You're like E. F. Hutton. When you talk, people listen!' "



"I suppose Beavis and Butt-head are the Ren and Stimpy of our time."

THE CAB RIDE FROM HELL STOPS HERE

Taxi Court is for the people in this city who believe that there are certain rules of conduct in the universe and that some of these rules apply even to cabs. Taxi Court is for the people who were taken, screaming and banging the back of the driver's seat, all the way to Washington Heights when what they wanted was a quick trip down to Washington Square. Taxi Court is for the people who are willing to look into the eyes of the guy who wouldn't take them home from LaGuardia Airport on that rainy Sunday night, *because he didn't feel like it*, and to say to the Taxi Court judge, "Yes, that's him. That's the one." Taxi Court is for the people who, acting in the name of wronged and maligned cab passengers everywhere, arm themselves with many and sometimes all of the anxieties that come like late-night surcharges in a city where cabs roam wild, and then tell those cabbies exactly where they can park it. These are people who, when they bring their complaints to Taxi Court, tend to be the emotional equivalent of a fare meter on the blink, flashing bright red. Thomas Coyne, a Taxi Court judge, says, "The atmosphere in Taxi Court, I would call it hostile."

Taxi Court judges have been around the block enough times to know a cabbie's story with little credibility when they hear one, and in Taxi Court, which is situated in the offices of the city Taxi and Limousine Commission, on Forty-first Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, that is mostly the kind of story they hear. Nance Kaplan is a Taxi Court judge, and the other afternoon, in a little gray room that serves as her chambers, she described her favorite kind of case. "I prefer it when I'm able to catch them in a lie," she said. One case she was about to hear that afternoon involved Roger Muscadi, a tall, thirty-six-year-old cabdriver with a booming West Indian voice and a big graying mustache, and Yazachew Gesese, a short, thin man of twenty-seven who had recently moved to New York from Ethiopia. Mr. Gesese had accused Mr. Muscadi of a 2-21(a) and a 2-60(b)—reckless driving and assault, respectively. As the hearing opened, Judge Kaplan sat facing the men across a large table. A taxi inspector sat between the two men. First came testimony from Mr. Gesese: he told of a morning when, he claimed, Mr. Muscadi's cab struck his car, on Lexington Avenue between Forty-sixth and Forty-seventh Streets. Then, according to Mr. Gesese, Mr. Muscadi got out of his cab. Mr. Gesese continued, "So this guy, first he punches me in the face, and then he grabs me in the neck and runs away."

Mr. Muscadi was permitted to rebut the charges. "All he said are lies!" Mr. Muscadi shouted. He was variously sitting, leaning on the table, and standing and waving his arms. "I don't see him," he said. "He's driving crazy! When he tried to cut me off, I stop the car to let him go, because in cab school they tell you that if you have a tailgater you should stop the car, so I stop the car and he scratched my car with his right bumper!" As evidence, he produced a photograph of a damaged cab. However, under lengthy questioning from the Judge, Mr. Muscadi eventually confessed that the damaged cab in the photo was not his. He also admitted that a "trip sheet" he had brought to Taxi Court—presumably to place him far from the scene of the accident—was one he'd made up, after clearing the strategy with his boss. "I said, 'Can I make up one on my own?' " Mr. Muscadi explained. "He said, 'O.K.' "

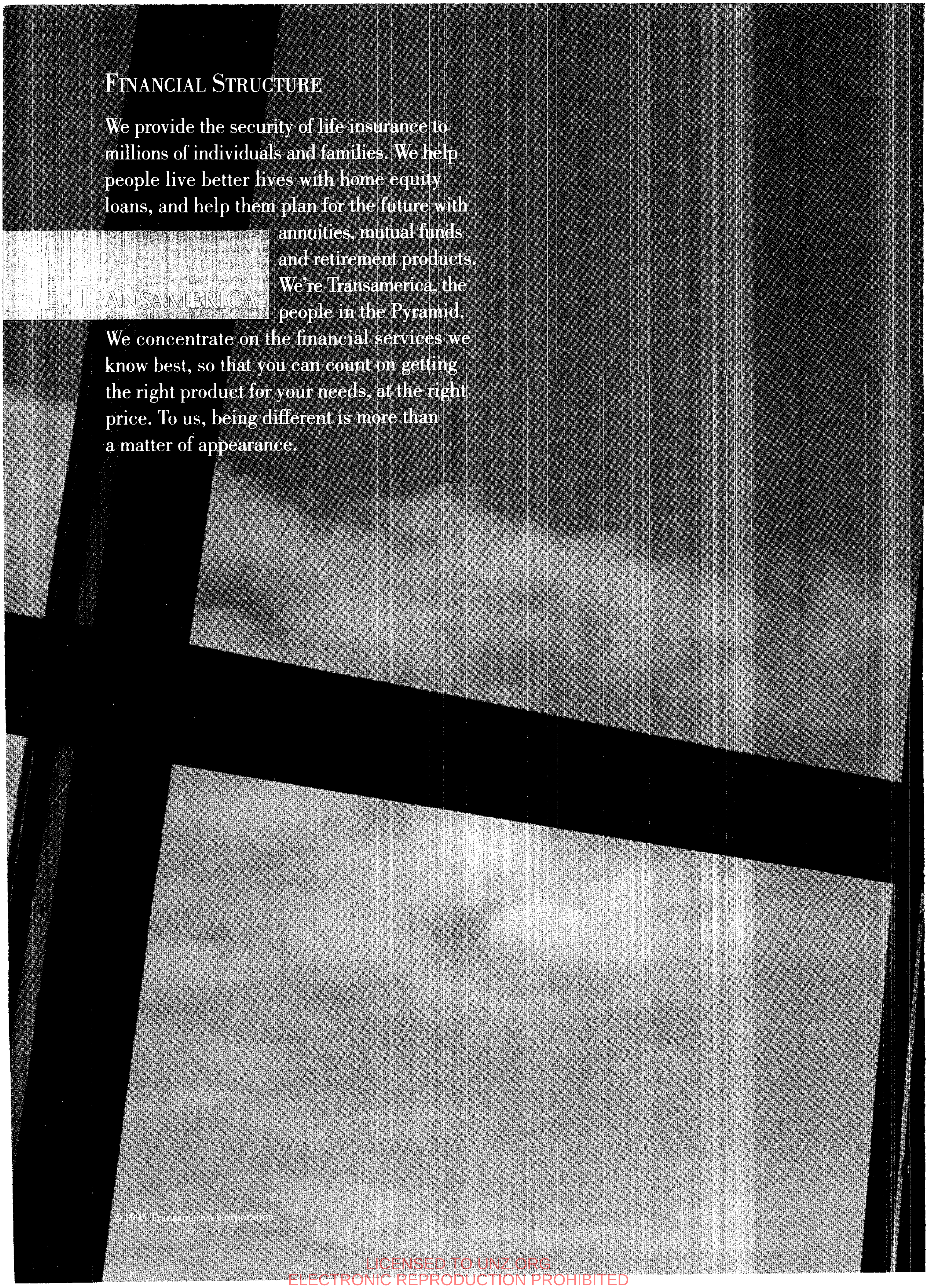
That was all Judge Kaplan needed. "I've got a real problem with your credibility," she told Mr. Muscadi. "As for your demeanor today, you were acting totally unprofessional in this hearing." Mr. Gesese nodded. Judge Kaplan concluded, "Your story is totally made up." Mr. Muscadi was fined four hundred and fifty dollars, had his hack license suspended for thirty days, and, shouting, made his way home.

MUST THERE ONLY BE A CHINATOWN?

The air smells of smoky tea and noodle steam at Kelley and Ping, which is a new multination-Asian market (and unambitious eating shop) on Greene Street, a credit card's throw from the rest of SoHo's shopping. This is a delicate scent, unlike the fishier smells of markets just a stroll away on Mott and Bayard Streets, and its gentility suggests an upscale cooking question: Why haven't the diverse, healthy, and versatile cuisines of Asia permeated New York's non-Asian restaurants? Why haven't this city's contemporary chefs, caught just now in a food-trend limbo, claimed for themselves the cosmopolitan West Coast cooking style sometimes called Pacific Rim?

It's not as if New Yorkers weren't anxious to welcome the rest of the world by inviting its galangal and its kaffir lime leaves into our kitchens. After all, the rest of the world, so to speak, already lives here. But visits to San Francisco and Los Angeles have sadly taught us that Pacific Rim cooking is possible there only because the local Thai, Vietnamese, and especially Chinese cuisines it samples and transforms have already moved far beyond any Anglo eggroll average and into the realms of the regional and the inventive. New York, on the other hand, may claim a few superb Japanese restaurants and one or two thrilling oddities, such as Jean-Georges Vongerichten's French-Thai Vong. Otherwise, we are stuck with fake noodle shops, greasy tod mun pla, and unusually dim dim sum. At least, that's what Californians say.

And New Yorkers apparently don't care. We'll be seen dutifully banqueting at downtown round tables, or we'll be (unseen) on our sofas, sodden cartons in hand. We'll continue to expect our chow fun fast and cheap, because New York's whole culinary Asia still resides in the tourist's Chinatown, its restaurants opened by immigrants with few other ways to make a living, its food adjusted to the outside customer's timid, condescending taste. Now that possibilities are legion, will New Yorkers be brave enough to kick the habit of the inauthentic and begin to walk away from the Chinatown of the mind? ♦



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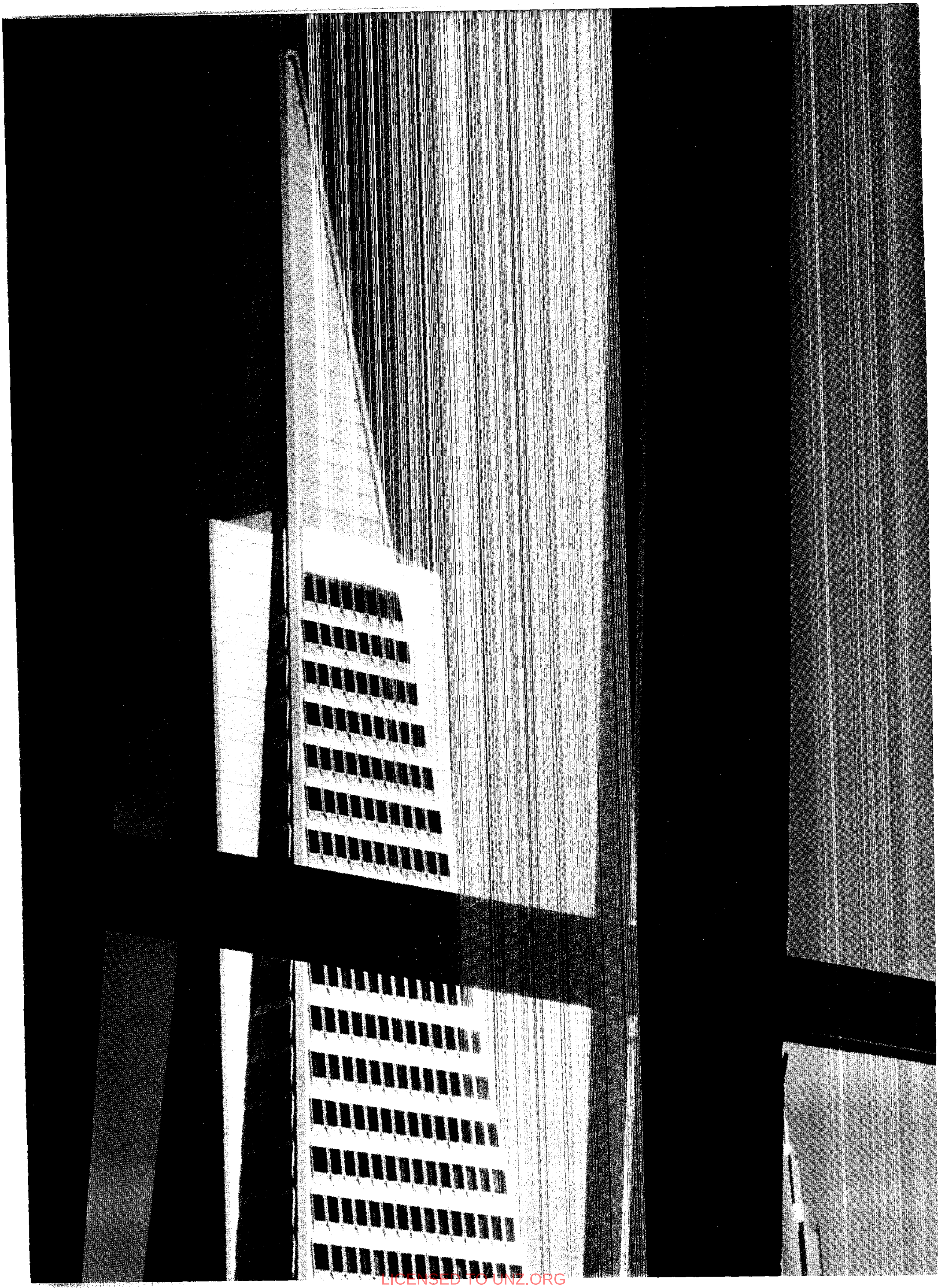

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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

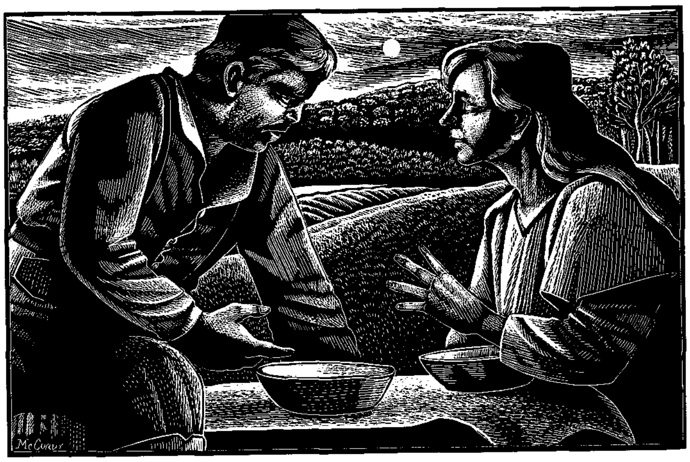
RECYCLING KENTUCKY

In his Pulitzer Prize-winning play Robert Schenkkan set out to redress the exploitation of Eastern Kentucky, but some locals claim he's part of the problem.

BY BOBBIE ANN MASON

WHEN Robert Schenkkan's "The Kentucky Cycle" won the Pulitzer Prize last year, it was the first play ever to do so without first being seen on Broadway. This drama, about two hundred years in the life of Kentucky, hasn't been seen in my home state of Kentucky, either, but soon after the Pulitzers were announced the script began circulating there, stirring up feelings and discussion. Since the author of the play is not from Kentucky, a lot of people were worried that once again Kentuckians would be portrayed as unschooled, violent, moonshine-swigging hillbillies. The sensitivity that so many Kentuckians have about being thought of this way—especially in the halls of high culture—is acute. It's the shoe thing. Deep down, Kentuckians are always afraid that people are going to be surprised to see them with shoes on. Also, they're afraid that people may make fun of the way they talk.

Of course, the United States has more on its mind than Kentucky footwear. But lurking in the background of American culture is a movie set. The scene is a lawless, backward wasteland populated by the Dukes of Hazzard, the Beverly Hillbillies, Li'l Abner, the feuding Hatfield and McCoy clans, the feral dimwits in "Deliverance"—the ignorant and the violent wild men of urban America's nightmares. Kentuckians and others throughout the Appalachian Mountains and the rural South have long been oppressed by these images.



Stacy Keach and Lillian Garrett-Groag in "The Kentucky Cycle," opening on Broadway in November.

MICHAEL McCURDY

Like many Kentuckians who leave the South, I have experienced the shame these images impose on us. They make you deny your language and your story and accept as authority others' view of you. In the sixties, when I moved to the Northeast after college, I met people who made me feel that my accent was uncouth, my tastes deplorable, my political and cultural opinions naïve.

Currently, Kentuckians' shame is compounded with confusion by the smashing success of "The Kentucky Cycle." During its runs in Seattle and Los Angeles in 1991 and 1992, it received generally glowing reviews, and then, of course, it won the Prize. The play is serious drama with a dark center. It is an epic, made up of nine short plays, and based on an interpretation of the history of Eastern Kentucky as one of violence, vengeance, and calamity. There are more than seventy characters, played by twenty actors, and the play lasts a marathon six and a half hours. The story traces the interwoven history of three families from the time Eastern Kentucky is settled, through the Civil War, and up to the present era of strip-mining. The characters fight and kill each other over possession of the land, and the play presents a legacy of increasing misery as each generation's errors and crimes are piled on those of their forebears. In the end, a glimmer of awareness of individual responsibility suggests that the cycle can be broken.

IN late July, I went to see Robert Schenkkan, in Van Nuys, California. "The Kentucky Cycle" was scheduled to open at the Kennedy Center in August and on Broadway in early November, and he was busy preparing the production for the East Coast. I wondered if a visit from a Kentuckian full of questions about his play might make him uneasy, but he welcomed me warmly into his home, a modest ranch house with a baby grand piano and a collection of quilts. A "For Sale" sign was in the front. "My wife and I hope to move to Seattle," Schenkkan explained. "I need more green in my life."

Robert Schenkkan, at forty, is an intense, serious man given to an occasional loud burst of laughter. He's of medium height and slight build, with sandy brown hair. He has a short reddish beard and wears narrow-rimmed round glasses.

Schenkkan's wife, Mary Anne, was in the kitchen making peach-melba jam during part of my visit. Her cupboard was filled with a dazzling variety of jams and relishes she had made. A former actress, she is a pleasant, cheerful woman with long brown hair and very clear skin. She said, smiling, "Sometimes I get too much fruit, and I have to remind myself this is a hobby. But I enjoy it. And it saves a trip to the florist if you're going to someone's house for dinner." The children—Joshua, seventeen months old, and Sarah, four—were helping.

For most of his professional life, Schenkkan has made his living as an actor. I knew that the inspiration for "The Kentucky Cycle" was a brief trip he made to Eastern Kentucky in 1981, when he was performing with the Actors Theatre of Louisville. A local doctor he had become friendly with invited him to visit the mountains. I asked Schenkkan to tell me about the trip, and he said that they set out on a spring weekend that was cold and wet. He hadn't been especially curious and had no expectations. But the misty gorges and lush vegetation impressed him deeply. So did the ugly strip-mining: whole mountainsides had been ripped open to expose coal seams.

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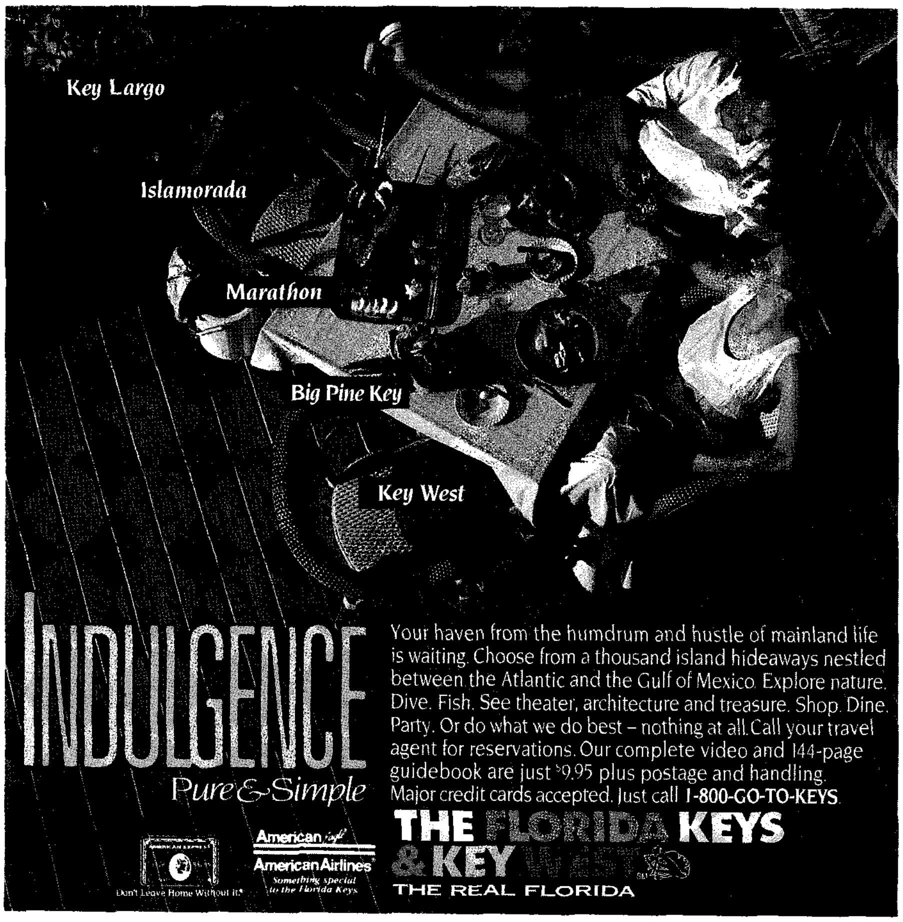

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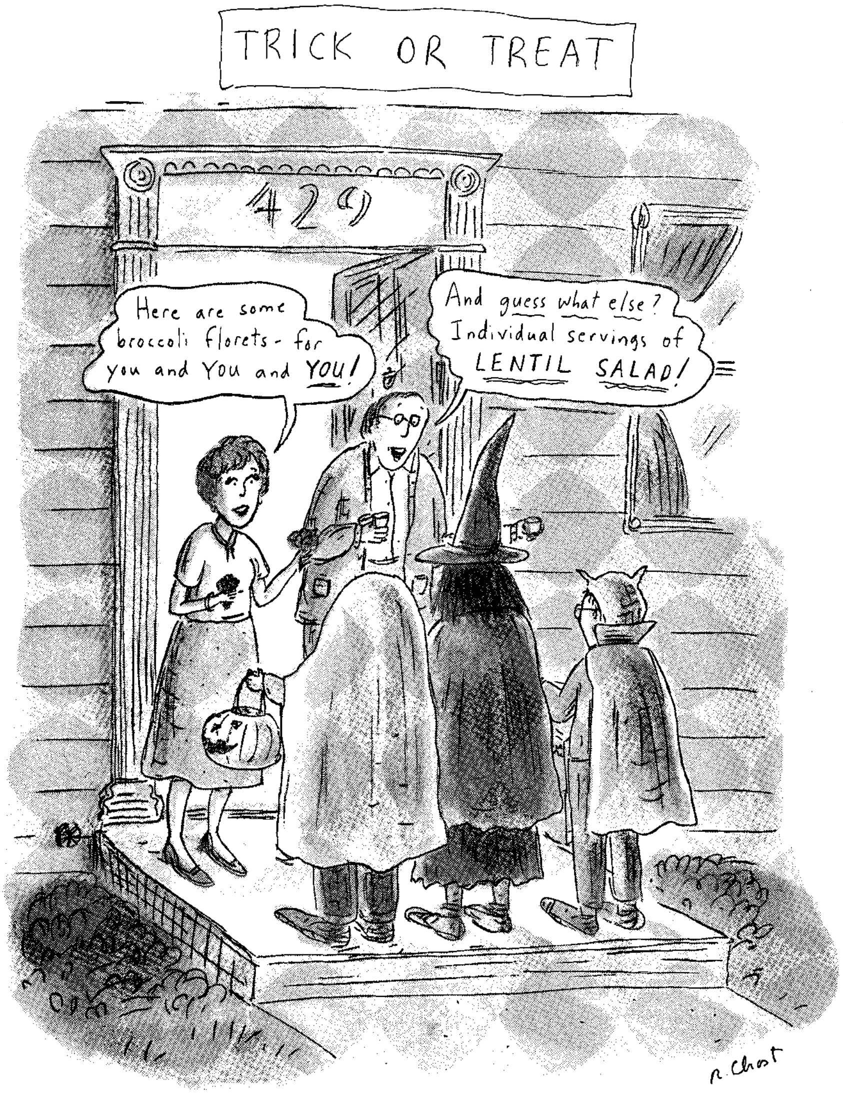
the few remaining nurses in a preventive-medicine program that the doctor had started. She was making her round of home visits.

"The first family we met was actually fairly secure economically by area standards," Schenkkan told me. "I believe the husband was a U.M.W. miner. They had several children, two of whom had died early, of gastrointestinal disorders—basically, from shit in the water. They had a stepdaughter living in the back yard in a bus set up on bricks. She was quite anxious. She was going to have to go into town and testify against her common-law husband, who had raped her three-year-old. They knew he was the perpetrator, because he had given the child clap."

Things got worse throughout the day, he said. "We visited this young couple living in a shotgun shack situated on a combination of gravel pit and garbage dump. Dirt floor, tin roof, single doorway, coal-burning stove in the corner for heat and light and cooking." Schenkkan quoted the doctor's "gallows humor" description of the smell in the place: "the characteristic smell of poverty in the mountains—as though you had taken a corn-shuck mattress, soaked it in piss, covered it with garbage and coal, and set it on fire."

"The woman there couldn't have been more than seventeen or eighteen," Schenkkan said. "She had two children under the age of three." The younger son was born with a foot deformity that could have been repaired in infancy, but the mother hadn't taken the child to the hospital, because, she said, the other child wouldn't have anybody to play with. The bone had hardened and would be dangerous and expensive to fix now.

"I was just totally blown out by what I had seen," Schenkkan said. "It was 1981—I was twenty-eight. Maybe this was more a reflection of my own naïveté. I was just appalled by the level of poverty and environmental abuse. Kentucky is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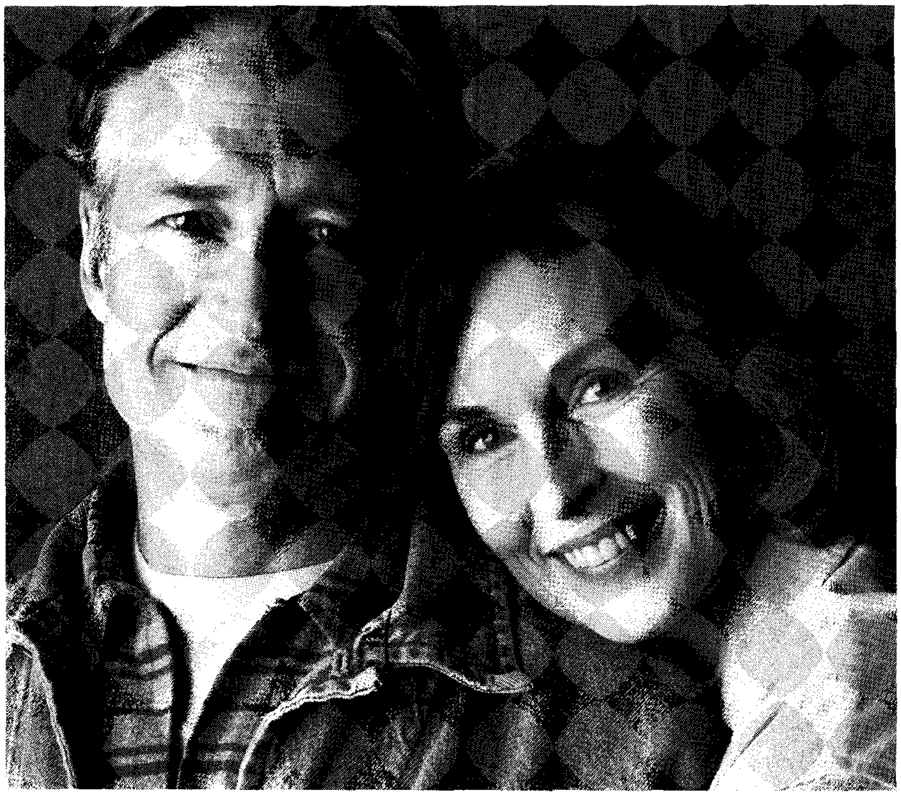


Finally, a medicine for the treatment of symptomatic benign prostate enlargement

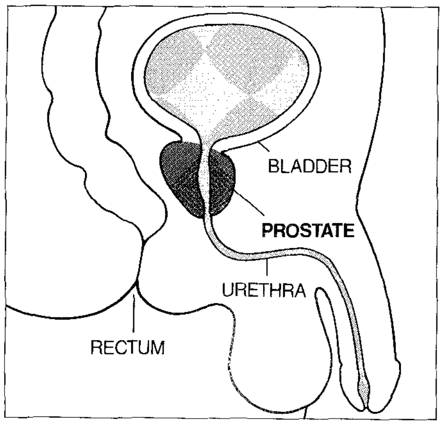
You can't make it till halftime anymore without having to go to the bathroom. You're getting up several times a night to urinate. It's beginning to bother you, but up to now, you've lived with it. The question is, should you?

Until recently, there wasn't a medicine that could help the condition known as symptomatic benign prostate enlargement or BPH. But now there is PROSCAR, the first oral prescription medicine that can actually shrink an enlarged prostate.

However, it is important to know the following: PROSCAR doesn't work for everyone. Even though the prostate shrinks, you may not see an improvement in urinary flow or symptoms. And you may need to take PROSCAR for 6 months or more to see whether it helps you.

How PROSCAR can shrink an enlarged prostate

As a man ages, a key hormone can help cause the prostate to grow. PROSCAR actually blocks the production of this hormone, so it helps shrink the prostate to a smaller size in many men. As a result, some men treated with PROSCAR experience an increased urinary flow and an improvement in urinary symptoms.



The prostate surrounds part of the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder. As the prostate enlarges, it can squeeze the urethra and cause urinary problems.

Why you should see your doctor soon

The problem will probably not get better by itself. In many cases, the prostate continues to enlarge and the symptoms may get worse. So if your urinary symptoms are bothering you, consult your family doctor or a urologist and find out if PROSCAR is an appropriate treatment for you. It is also important to have regular checkups. *While benign prostate enlargement is not cancer and does not lead to cancer, the two conditions can exist at the same time.*

Remember, only a doctor can evaluate your symptoms and their possible causes. So don't wait any longer. You may find out that your enlarged prostate can be made into a smaller problem.

For a free, informative booklet, "Every man should know about his prostate," call 1-800-635-4452 today.

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Please see patient information on the adjacent page.

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such an extraordinarily beautiful, beautiful place. Those hills are so— That *green.* And the profusion of wildflowers and flowering shrubs is just breathtaking. And then the strip-mining—I had a physical response to it in the pit of my stomach. It just looks like the fucking moon."

Schenkkan and his doctor friend spent the rest of the weekend with the owner of a small coal-mining operation. He had a palatial split-level home on a mountaintop, with an indoor gym and a billiard room and a helicopter pad. Schenkkan, astonished by the contrasting images he was seeing, couldn't help talking about the grim poverty a short distance away. But the mine owner didn't seem embarrassed, or even concerned, Schenkkan told me. "He said, 'These people are lazy—stupid—and that's why they suffer.' It didn't have anything to do with him. It didn't have anything to do with the context. It was just their own damn fault."

Schenkkan said he didn't know whom to be mad at. "I just knew I was mad. And I was upset. I didn't understand how this could *be*—it was just so incongruous. This guy who was so blasé, to put it politely, about the extreme want of his neighbors wasn't far removed from them. He wasn't old wealth. He didn't come from a long line of country clubbers. His wealth was an accident of geopolitical fate."

Little in Schenkkan's background had prepared him for the shock of his trip to Appalachia. Born in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, he grew up in Austin, Texas, the third of four sons. He remembers the Austin of his youth as a small town, a place that was comfortable and safe. He was raised in a literate household, where his acting and writing talents were encouraged.

"I was a voracious reader," Schenkkan said. "I read everything from the Encyclopædia Britannica to ketchup-bottle labels. I was not terribly athletic. A lot of kids remember their first at-bat. *I* remember the first time I read 'Of Mice and Men.'

"My father used to tell me stories when I was a child. One of the strongest memories of my childhood is long car trips from Texas to Florida, Texas to California. Four young boys in a station wagon, so you can imagine the chaos. He would tell these stories, and they all started out the same way. They'd start out, 'So there I was, standing on the corner of Toity-toid and Toid Avenue, smoking me big black cigar, when all of a

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PROSCAR is for the treatment of symptomatic benign prostatic hyperplasia and for use by *men only.*

Your doctor may prescribe PROSCAR if you have a medical condition called benign prostatic hyperplasia or BPH. This occurs only in men.

Please read this information, as well as the leaflet which accompanies your medication, before you start taking PROSCAR. Also, read the leaflet each time you renew your prescription, just in case anything has changed. Remember, this leaflet does not take the place of careful discussions with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss PROSCAR when you start taking your medication and at regular checkups.

What is BPH?

BPH is an enlargement of the prostate gland. After age 50, most men develop enlarged prostates. The prostate is located below the bladder. As the prostate enlarges, it may slowly restrict the flow of urine. This can lead to symptoms such as:

- a weak or interrupted urinary stream
- a feeling that you cannot empty your bladder completely
- a feeling of delay or hesitation when you start to urinate
- a need to urinate often, especially at night
- a feeling that you must urinate right away.

Treatment options for BPH

There are three main treatment options for BPH:

- **Program of monitoring or "Watchful Waiting".** If a man has an enlarged prostate gland and no symptoms or if his symptoms do not bother him, he and his doctor may decide on a program of monitoring which would include regular checkups, instead of medication or surgery.
- **Medication.** Your doctor may prescribe PROSCAR for BPH. See **"What PROSCAR does"** below.
- **Surgery.** Some patients may need surgery. Your doctor can describe several different surgical procedures for BPH. Which procedure is best depends on your symptoms and medical condition.

What PROSCAR does

PROSCAR lowers levels of a key hormone called DHT (dihydrotestosterone), which is a major cause of prostate growth. Lowering DHT leads to shrinkage of the enlarged prostate gland in most men. This can lead to gradual improvement in urine flow and symptoms over the next several months. However, since each case of BPH is different, you should know that:

- Even though the prostate shrinks, you may NOT see an improvement in urine flow or symptoms.
- You may need to take PROSCAR for six (6) months or more to see whether it helps you.
- Even though you take PROSCAR and it may help you, it is not known whether PROSCAR reduces the need for surgery.

What you need to know while taking PROSCAR

- **You must see your doctor regularly.** While taking PROSCAR, you must have regular checkups. Follow your doctor's advice about when to have these checkups.
- **About side effects.** Like all prescription drugs, PROSCAR may cause side effects. Side effects due to PROSCAR may include impotence (or inability to have an erection) and less desire for sex. Each of these side effects occurred in less than 4% of patients in clinical studies. In some cases side effects went away while the patient continued to take PROSCAR.

Some men taking PROSCAR® (Finasteride) may have a decrease in the amount of semen released during sex. This decrease does not appear to interfere with normal sexual function.

You should discuss side effects with your doctor before taking PROSCAR and anytime you think you are having a side effect.

- **Checking for prostate cancer.** Your doctor has prescribed PROSCAR for symptomatic BPH and not for cancer—but a man can have BPH and prostate cancer at the same time. Doctors usually recommend that men be checked for prostate cancer once a year when they turn 50 (or 40 if a family member has had prostate cancer). These checks should continue while you take PROSCAR. PROSCAR is not a treatment for prostate cancer.
- **About prostate specific antigen (PSA).** Your doctor may have done a blood test called PSA. PROSCAR can alter PSA values. For more information, talk to your doctor.
- **A warning about PROSCAR and pregnancy.**

PROSCAR is for use by MEN only.

PROSCAR is generally well tolerated in men. However, women who are pregnant, or women who could become pregnant, should avoid the active ingredient in PROSCAR.

If the active ingredient is absorbed by a woman who is pregnant with a male baby, it may cause the male baby to be born with abnormalities of the sex organs. Therefore, any woman who is pregnant or who could become pregnant must not come into direct contact with the active ingredient in PROSCAR.

Two of the ways in which a woman might absorb the active ingredient in PROSCAR are:

Sexual contact. Your semen may contain a small amount of the active ingredient of the drug. If your partner is pregnant, or if you and your partner decide to have a baby, you must stop taking PROSCAR and talk to your doctor. If your partner could become pregnant, proper use of a condom can reduce the risk of exposing her to your semen (discuss this further with your doctor).

Handling broken tablets. Women who are pregnant or who could become pregnant must not handle broken tablets of PROSCAR.

PROSCAR tablets are coated to prevent contact with the active ingredient during normal handling. If this coating is broken, the tablets should not be handled by women who are pregnant or who could become pregnant.

If a woman who is pregnant comes into contact with the active ingredient in PROSCAR, a doctor should be consulted. Remember, these warnings apply only if the woman exposed to PROSCAR is pregnant or could become pregnant.

How to take PROSCAR

Follow your doctor's advice about how to take PROSCAR. You must take it every day. You may take it with or between meals. To avoid forgetting to take PROSCAR, it may be helpful to take it the same time every day.

Do not share PROSCAR with anyone else; it was prescribed only for you.

Keep PROSCAR and all medicines out of the reach of children.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PROSCAR AND BPH, TALK WITH YOUR DOCTOR. IN ADDITION, TALK TO YOUR PHARMACIST OR OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDER.

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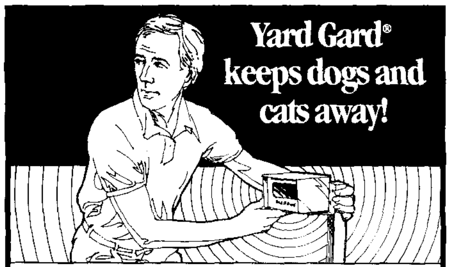

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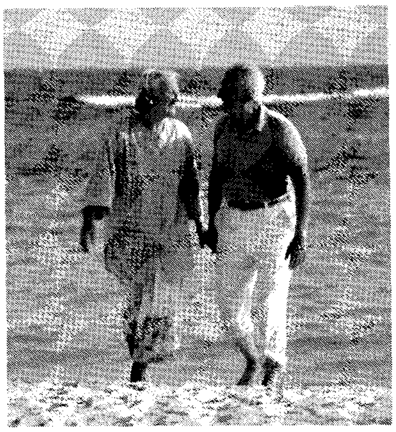
sudden . . .' And then this adventure would happen. He would just make them up. It wasn't until two years ago that he told me he had taken that opening from Damon Runyon. That's such a strong memory. We lived for those stories. On a certain level, that's what good theatre is. The essence of a good story is: What happened next? 'The Kentucky Cycle' lives on that level. It's a roller-coaster, edge-of-your-seat, bite-your-nails kind of story."

Schenkkan's first attempt to write something inspired by what he had seen in Eastern Kentucky was "Tall Tales," which ended up as the sixth play of the cycle. It took several years for the nine plays to come together as a whole. He said the huge effort was motivated by three critical events: the trip to Appalachia, meeting and marrying Mary Anne, and the death of their first son.

In starting a family, the Schenkkans ran into a series of wrenching difficulties—a miscarriage, then the stillbirth of a boy they named McKenzie. Seven months into the pregnancy, they learned there was a serious problem. Schenkkan said, "We went home, we prayed and meditated and chanted and positive-imaged and sang to McKenzie; we went to psychic healers, took vitamins, and did everything we could." Two weeks later, the couple lost the child. "That event just changed me unalterably. There was no way to put that in any kind of meaningful context. There was nothing inhibited about our grieving, and it made people uncomfortable. This was a weekend in a foreign country. People's reluctance in this country to deal with the dark side—to deal with the issues of loss, grief—was certainly cast in a very personal light." His complacency shattered, Schenkkan went on to deepen and expand "The Kentucky Cycle," imbuing it with the sense of tragedy his loss had brought home to him.

Schenkkan told me he is fascinated by the importance we give to family legacies, and by the way things get handed down. "Our family sagas continue to play themselves out in ways that we're completely unaware of but that are still very potent." He believes that this is a "strong force" in "The Kentucky Cycle."

"My wife tells a wonderful story about a friend of hers who used to cut a pot roast in a really idiosyncratic way. Mary Anne said, 'Why do you do that?' and she said, 'I don't know. That's how my



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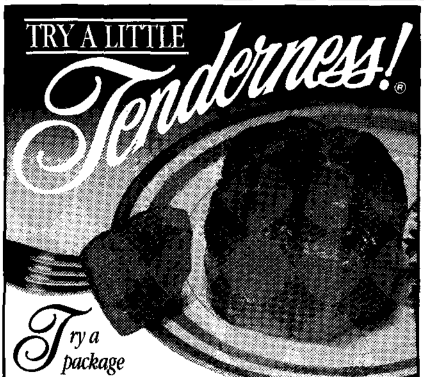

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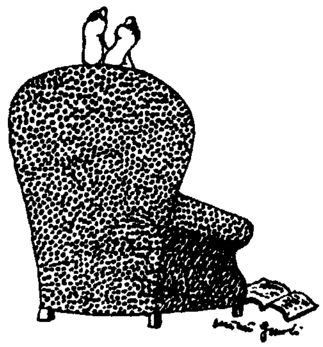

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mother used to—I'll ask her.' She asked her mother, and she said, 'That's how your grandmother taught me.' The grandmother said, 'I don't know, that's how my mother taught me.' The mamaw was alive, and they said, 'Mamaw, why did you do this?' and she said, 'We only had one pan, and it was a small pan. It was the only way you could get a pot roast in the oven.' " Schenkkan goes straight from this humorous story to a serious commentary on it. "How often are we as emotional beings trimming our emotional and psychic selves to fit a context that was true three or four generations back but has no relevance today! We're still acting out those old feuds, those old arguments, those old issues."

Schenkkan believes that in order for us to avoid being trapped by our history we must face it directly. "One of our big problems is how much we're in denial about our past, and how unwilling we are to examine our past and to come to terms with it," he said. "There's so much loss in this country, so much grief that we're in such denial about. There's a river of loss that runs through the bedrock of this country—as deep as any seam of anthracite in Eastern Kentucky."

Since he did not approach the play as a documentarian, he said, he did not return to the mountains for research. Instead, he did much of his research at the U.C.L.A. library, using Harry Caudill's "Night Comes to the Cumberlands" as a guide. (Caudill's history of Appalachia, published in 1963, brought the nation's attention to the poverty and devastation caused by the coal industry in the mountains.) Schenkkan insists that the play is not really about Kentucky but about American mythology—essentially, the failure of the American dream. He spoke intensely about the need to transcend our "us-versus-them" attitudes. "All of us are part of this gestalt, this living organism, the biosphere," he said. He pointed to the interconnectedness of the characters in "The Kentucky Cycle," saying, "By the end of the play, all these people are blood relatives. We recognize that. It adds a poignancy and tragedy to their struggle and prompts a reëvaluation of our own connections."

The next day, Schenkkan and I sat outdoors at the Fox Television Center, in Los Angeles, where the cast of "The Kentucky Cycle" was rehearsing, and talked about the way people in Eastern Kentucky might view his play. He said that he was aware of the sensitivity of Appalachians to the way they have been perceived by the rest of the country. He said he thought that the region had been treated like a colony, with its natural resources removed. And he called the hillbilly stereotype "odious."

"My mandate as a playwright is to tell the truth as I see it," he said. "It was important that I be as historically accurate as I could be. And I tried to do that. But, beyond that, if what I have to say is dark, or perhaps not the best advertising one would wish for oneself—well, that's just the way it is. And I'm sorry about that, but I'm not going to change what I see, what is for me truth, just to make someone feel better. The fact is, there are a lot of problems there. There are tremendous problems. What I'm interested in is how much Eastern Kentucky's situation, which can be viewed, and has historically been viewed, as somewhat isolated, is in fact really a paradigm for the United States as a whole."

Later in the conversation, he spoke again of his belief in the importance of the artist's role in illuminating the truth of the country's experience. "If I don't do that, who will? If writers don't begin that process, then who will?"

IN August, when "The Kentucky Cycle" began an eight-week pre-Broadway run at the Kennedy Center, a small "Appalachian Festival" was held in the lobby: a display of Kentucky arts and crafts (weavings, folk-art rooster sculptures, quilts, Shaker boxes); a display of photographs by a Harlan County photographer; and a performance by a Washington-based clogging group. The Center's gift shop had more folk-art roosters, and also tobacco dolls and corn-shuck dolls. Venders were offering " 'The Kentucky Cycle' with a Taste of Southern Hospitality": Bluegrass pizza (green tomatoes and beer cheese on herb bread); Kentucky ham with maple mustard; lemon chess pie; coffee topped with bourbon-flavored whipped cream. (This food, it should be noted, is from the horsey plantation world of the Bluegrass region; it is not the soup-beans-and-cornbread cuisine of the mountains.)

Several Kentuckians attended the first full-day performance of the play in Washington, and created a minor media storm. The press reported that some of them thought the play's characters were stereotypes. Some thought the play held

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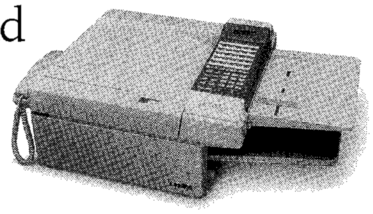

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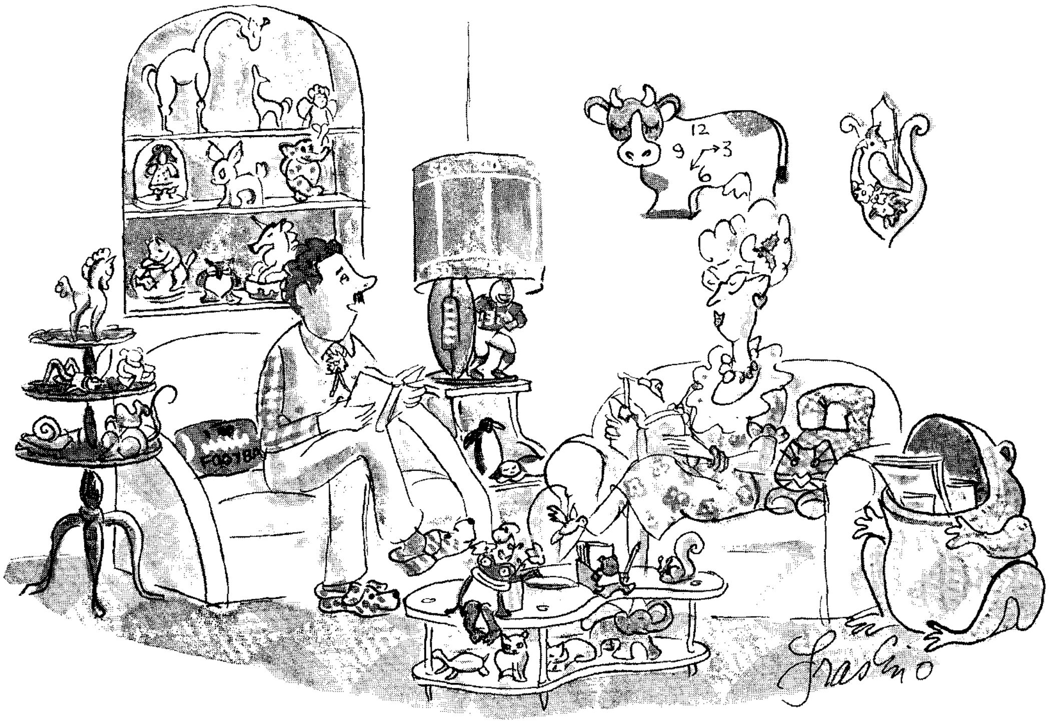

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Kentuckians up to ridicule. Most thought the dialect spoken onstage was inauthentic. (Schenkkan had told me that the language of the play was not meant to be naturalistic; for the sake of clarity, he had modified the regional dialect—without, he felt, relinquishing its poetry.) Some said they wished that the playwright had spent more time in the state, to learn more about the mountain people he was depicting.

Back in Kentucky, people had been talking about the play for some time. Gurney Norman, who was one of the Kentuckians who rushed to Washington to see the play at the first opportunity, had been the catalyst for much of the discussion. An associate professor of English at the University of Kentucky, he has been perhaps the most outspoken critic of "The Kentucky Cycle." Norman, who is fifty-six, is best known for his 1971 novel, "Divine Right's Trip," which was published in its entirety in "The Last Whole Earth Catalog" and earned him a cult following. His 1977 short-story collection, "Kinfolks: The Wilgus Stories," has been the basis for two short films and an Off Off Broadway play. I've known him since we were both students at the University of Kentucky. He is from Hazard, and he is known by his first name in much of Eastern and central Kentucky, where he is an active leader of workshops for schoolteachers.

I talked with him a few days after he saw "The Kentucky Cycle." We met in Berea, at the foot of the Eastern Kentucky mountains, where he teaches a writing workshop in the summers. We sat in a lounge at Boone Tavern, an old hotel staffed mostly by Berea College students. (All the Berea students work, some in the busy industry that provides the world with dulcimers, pottery, and other mountain crafts.) Gurney Norman is a large, gray-haired man who speaks eagerly, even impulsively, but also pauses often, searching in the distance for his next words. "I know the story of Appalachia deep in my bones," he said. "I have immersed myself in it all my adult life, and to see Robert Schenkkan run roughshod over a whole culture is very upsetting."

Norman said that he was impressed with the stagecraft and the acting in the Washington production—particularly in the coal-mining scenes—but that he came away feeling that the play unfairly uses Kentucky as an object lesson for the nation at large. "The play imposes the form of classical tragedy—where people

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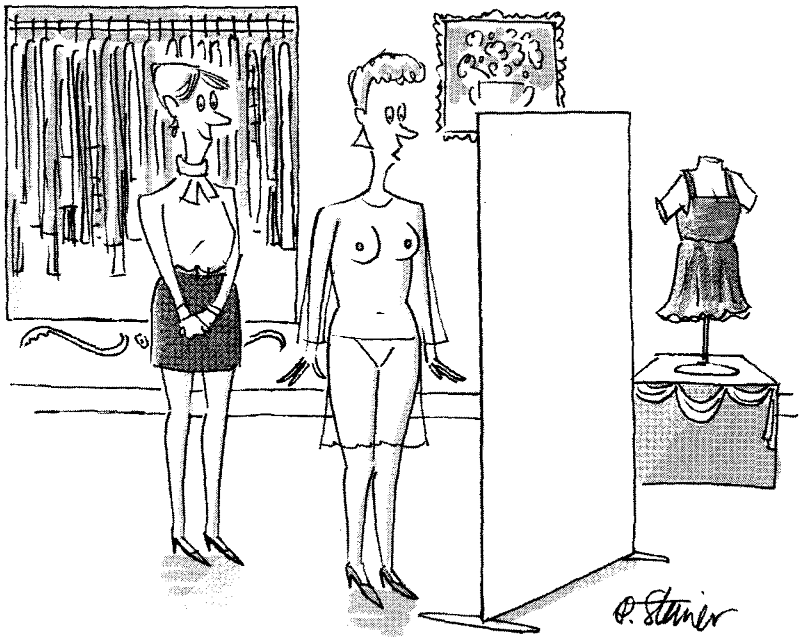

"Is it too revealing?"

• •

bring about their own downfall—on the history of the region," he said. "The play's vision is inaccurate and unjust—it blames the victim."

The people of Appalachia, he said, had been victimized by outside interests—especially absentee coal barons, who were responsible for removing the region's wealth and leaving poverty and ruined land behind. But in the play, he said, "The absentee owners are ignored."

Norman credits Schenkkan for attempting a work on an epic scale but faults him for "tromping on real people and the real facts of their history." Instead of trying to understand the people and culture of the region, Norman said, Schenkkan stigmatizes Appalachia as the epitome of American violence and greed. The result is to burden the mountain people with a sense of shame and guilt which Norman believes is not rightly theirs to bear. "Nobody's denying that there's still awful poverty here, but people refuse to be defeated," he said. "The tradition of citizen participation is greater here than anywhere else I know of. Robert Schenkkan may not realize he's written into a living situation. People here resent it, and they feel used. The real story of Eastern Kentucky is that people are trying to live lives of decency."

Appalachia, Norman went on, had been invaded for the last hundred years by all sorts of do-gooders and speculators and tourists. The outsiders descending on the region have included missionaries, educators, travel writers, timber companies, the Army Corps of Engineers, movie companies, and (especially in recent years) the media. "In 1964 and 1965, I was a reporter for the Hazard *Herald,*" he said. "Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty was getting started, and major media from all over the world came to Kentucky to see the poverty. Their first stop was the local paper, to get oriented. So we developed the Tour. I'd take them straight to the worst place I could find. Then I'd take them to the most luxurious place I could find. Everybody had one day, and wanted to see the extremes. When I escorted journalists on the Tour back then, I gave them the story—that powerful corporate forces bought up the wealth of Eastern Kentucky and operated it in colonial fashion. It was absurdly simplified. Robert Schenkkan clearly got the Tour in 1981, but by then it was long outdated. And he seems to have missed the main point. At least, it's not reflected in the play. What's left out is people's resistance—and their real lives."

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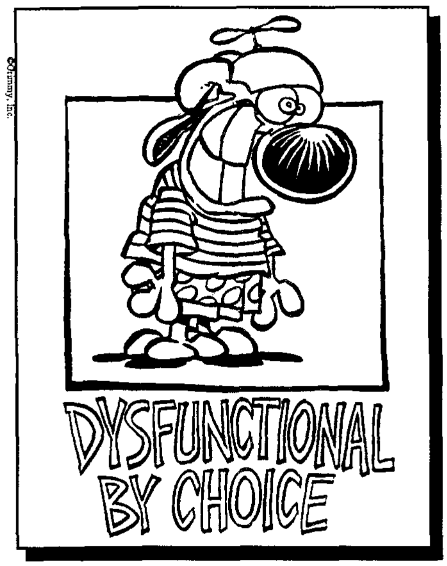

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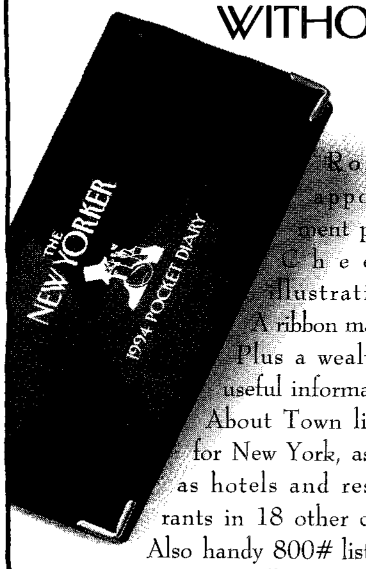

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as citizens' groups fought fiercely against oppressive influences—particularly strip-mining—the prevailing images of Appalachia had become even more distant from reality. A thriving intellectual community and a dynamic culture have emerged in the mountains since the nineteen-sixties, he said. "Yet the media and the scholars keep coming. Each one thinks he's discovered the place. But mountain people are savvy now. They see all the 'experts' coming in and can spot their bullshit a mile away. Lately, it has been a heavy invasion. About once a month, it seems, a camera crew comes in. We say they pop in, pop out, pop off. Sally Jessy, Dan Rather, two or three of those tabloid TV shows—they all run together. America *needs* hillbillies. People in the urban centers want to read about uncouthness. No other story will do. Mountain people are the last group in America it is acceptable to ridicule. No one would stand it for a minute if you took any other group—Native Americans, African-Americans, Hispanics, women—and held it up as an example of everything that is low and brutal and mean. But somehow it's O.K. to do that with hillbillies."

Norman paused and shook his head. "I'm a traditional Democrat," he said. "There's a difference between the liberalism this play expresses and the liberalism of the common man. 'The Kentucky Cycle' is a very politically correct play. It's the most fashionable idea of our time. It's revisionist history—point by point. I call it connect-the-dots drama. The old American dream of the frontier is replaced by a vision of butchers and murderers. It goes from one extreme to the other. This vicious hatred of America is very prevalent today. That means if I want to write that my grandmother worked hard and went to church and tried to live a decent life, that would be dismissed as 'pastoral nostalgia.' It's not only not P.C.—it's *illegal!*"

He laughed, apologizing for overstating the matter. He reached for his copy of "The Kentucky Cycle." "The language of the play is 'fotched on,' " he said. "It's made up—not inevitable, with the texture, sound, and richness of a cultural depth behind it. It's the language of a nowhere place. The dialogue is recycled from movies; the attempts to be authentic are absurd." He searched through the book. "Here's my favorite one: 'It don't make me no nevermind!' It appears twice

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in six pages. It's invented country talk. And 'Get on to home!' That's generic movie talk. You long for real speech."

He removed a piece of paper from a canvas carryall. "This is my newsletter," he said, with mock seriousness. "It's called *Local News*." The "newsletter" appeared to be a sheet of paper containing parody commentaries on "The Kentucky Cycle."

"Here's a letter to the editor," he said. He read aloud its heading, "Trace Fork Man Reads Play, Shoots Dog in Frustration," and then he read the letter:

> Dear Editor,
>
> I stood in the book-store and read about 10 pages of the Ky. Cycle for free. When I seen Mamaw's name in there I thought daggone, this is good. Then I come to where hit said everybody was so pore in spirit and didn't have no soul and I said to Martha, I said Babydoll, this thang is wrote by a heathern. I'd of pitched hit in the trash but then I'd of had to pay fer hit. I didn't really shoot my dog, I was just tryin' my hand at creyative ritin.
>
> Yours truly,
> Rankin File

"Sometimes you have to respond with humor," Norman said.

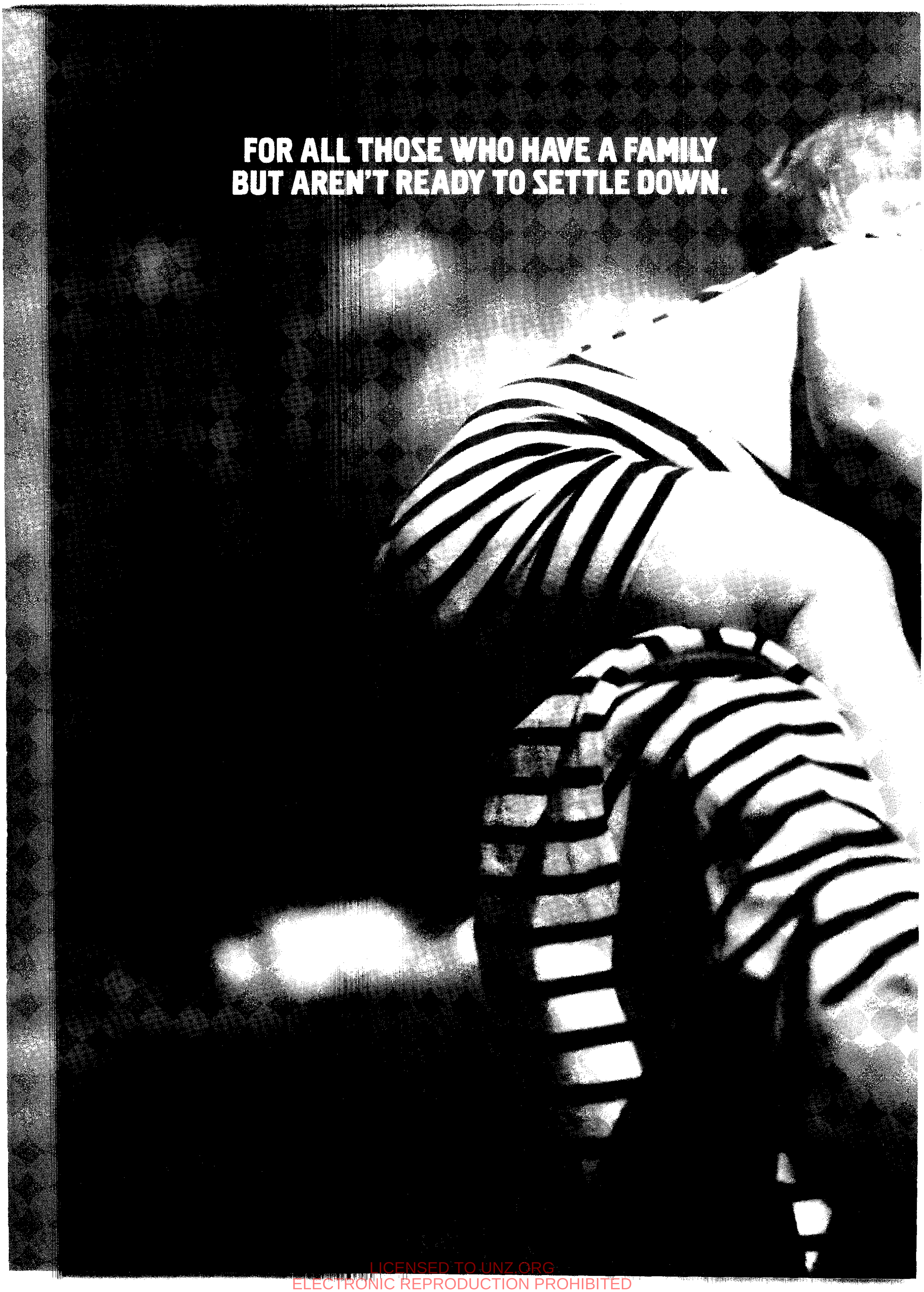
He put away the newsletter and grew serious again. He said, "There are certain qualities of mountain people that in the past have made them vulnerable to invasive forces such as the coal industry, as well as the culture industry: their modesty, shyness, deference. They're soft-spoken, and they have a suspicion of strangers but a real desire to be welcoming and to be liked. If John D. Rockefeller were to come, they'd fix him supper. They'd feel it was an honor. They're humble. But there's a fiercer aspect as well: Don't violate my family. It's important to talk about this play, and it will be debated for years. I don't have anything personal against Mr. Schenkkan. I'm sure he's a nice man, and I don't think he meant to cause pain. I'm actually stunned by my own intense pain and confusion in response to 'The Kentucky Cycle.' But his boot is in my face and I have to yell."

Robert Schenkkan had evidently already felt Gurney Norman's boot in his own face. A few days before I interviewed Norman in Berea, he was quoted in the Washington *Post* attacking the play for, among other things, using a joke at a moment of tragedy—after a coal-mine explosion. (In the Kennedy Center production, when the character named Mary Anne Rowen, a union organizer, says, "I think if we always waited for the men to do somethin' we still be livin' in caves," the audience response was enthusiastic.) "When you're talking about the deaths of working men underground, an absolute reverence is called for," the *Post* quoted Norman as saying. "But what you get here is political agitprop, which the large audience was just eating up. I think the play serves everyone who feels that they are hip to Schenkkan's little urban sophisticated ultra-liberal agenda. But the long-suffering Kentucky people are left out of that equation."

Disturbed by the charge, Schenkkan telephoned me to respond. "I agree that the subject is sacred. But Mary Anne doesn't make the statement right after the mine disaster. It happens later in the text—after the strike fails, when the strike is over. To make me appear insensitive, he has to rearrange the text. It's that kind of misreading I'm particularly annoyed by. He is quoted as saying that I have an ultra-liberal agenda. As opposed to what? A reactionary one? If I come down in the struggle on the side of labor, I cheerfully accept that designation. If he wants to defend Peabody Coal and Standard Oil, he's free to do so. What I will not let people do is make this play into something it isn't and rewrite it and make me into something I am not."

Schenkkan once again emphasized that his play should not be misread as a piece of documentary history. "This isn't even naturalism," he said. "We're not in the world of naturalism here." He mentioned Arthur Miller's "The Crucible." "It wasn't a historical documentary about the Puritans. That's not what Miller was about. Nor was O'Neill's 'Mourning Becomes Electra' about a Civil War general murdered by his wife. O'Neill was seeing something Aeschylean. I don't even know if there *was* a Civil War general murdered by his wife. As historical documentation, it would be mush."

I thought of asking Gurney Norman for his response to Schenkkan's response, but I decided against it. This cycle will continue, I suspect. In the country, when two farmers can't agree to maintain a common fence each man builds a fence on his own land. They have a name for the space left between the two fences. They call it the Devil's lane. ◆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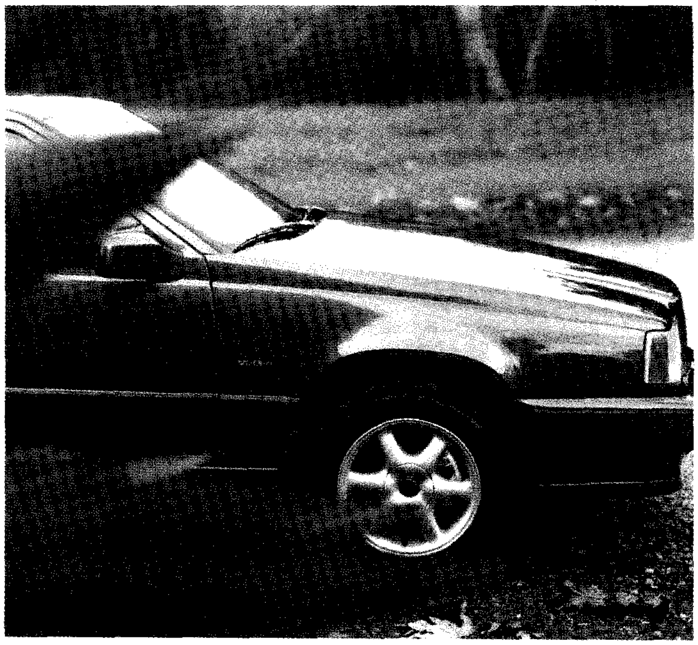

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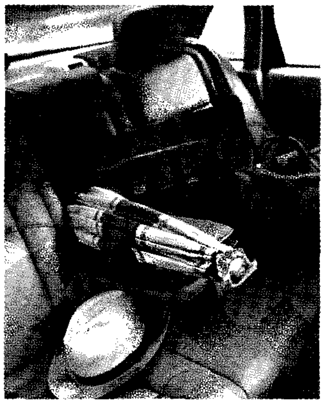

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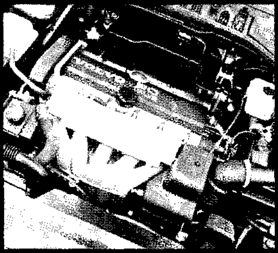

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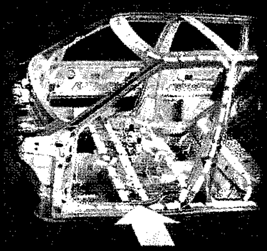

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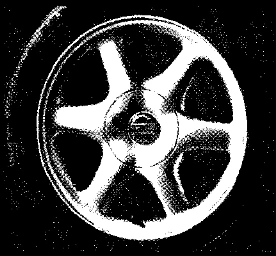

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REFLECTIONS

DAYS OF THE DEAD

On a recent visit to his native Mexico City, the pathologist-author recalls his first childhood encounter with the true image of death.

BY F. GONZÁLEZ-CRUSSI

TWO years ago, I participated in the making of a film about my work produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation for the English television series "Bookmark." I suppose the filmmakers were drawn by my having united the writer's desk with the anatomical-dissection table, since as a pathologist who writes I have for some time searched, not always knowing what for, into both texts and corpses. These two occupations are not as disparate as they seem, but the producers may have perceived me as an anomaly and wished to explain its origin by reviewing my history. Hence the initial scenes were shot in and around my birthplace, Mexico City. The completed film was aired in England on April 27, 1992. A typical product of our electronic age, it had a life measured only in minutes, but now, long after the televised images have dissolved, other images, bodied forth in the course of the production, still stir with life in my memory. These fragile forms will die, too, no doubt. I hand them over to the written word, for their terminal care, in what follows.

SUE COE

I HAVE a free day in Mexico City. The film director and his crew will be busy capturing some of the many visually striking scenes that may be encountered here during the first days of November. This is the time when Mexico exuberantly celebrates its Day of the Dead, or All Souls' Day—akin to Halloween. Left on my own, I roam the streets and recognize some familiar places with that bittersweet mixture of nostalgia, tender enthusiasm, and disappointment which is known only to emigrants who return to their native land after a long absence. I soon find myself in the kind of dreamy and wistful mood that is always apt to evoke long-forgotten experiences.

My life has not been especially eventful, a circumstance for which I ought to be thankful. Adversity and good fortune have come my way in the usual aleatoric combinations of light and shade. The pains that seemed unbearable have shrunk, with time, to what I must deem their truer magnitude; likewise, events bright and fair have lost their glimmer in the hazy distance of time. As I look back on this faint, dappled tableau, no different from the landscape of most men's lives, few patches seem still possessed of their original, vigorous lustre. One episode, however, shines with an unusual and fantastic light in the midst of the general dullness. It is my first encounter with the true image of death.

I must have been nine years old. My third-grade teacher announced, in pleading accents and a plangent voice, which conflicted with his usual stern, unsympathetic demeanor, "One of your peers has ceased to exist." I understood this to mean that a classmate had died, but since no one in my own class had stopped attending school, I assumed that my teacher probably taught on another shift—perhaps in another school—or worked as a private tutor. The teacher's unusual address ended

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with an exhortation to pay our respects to the deceased child and his family. Those of us willing to do so were to sign our names on a sheet by the classroom door at recess. On the day of the ceremony, which was not a school day, the school bus would pick up the children who had signed. I was the first to sign up.

At the appointed time, clad in the school's uniform—white shirt, gray trousers, navy-blue sweater with two horizontal red bands across the left arm and an embroidered emblem sewn on the front, at mid-chest—I waited for the bus at the usual street corner, holding my mother's hand. The bus was late that day. I had expected to see some of my classmates on it, but none were there.

The bus followed an unaccustomed route, since this time its destination was not the school. I grew slightly apprehensive as I realized that I was going to remain the only passenger on board. Not even the prefect—a menial entrusted with the undignifying charge of keeping a rowdy group of children from relapsing into complete barbarism, but sometimes arrogating to himself with sadistic relish the right to organize fights into sportsmanlike boxing matches—was there. I was not frightened, however. It takes stronger stimuli than these to frighten a carefree nine-year-old enjoying a school-sponsored outing on a bright Sunday morning. But I recall a certain feeling of uneasiness when it became clear that no other children were to be picked up during the long, circuitous route. The bus rolled deep into a destitute area, where dilapidated tenements, junk yards, and the sparseness of people added a depressing note of solitude to the unsettling experience.

The bus driver and I, sole occupants of the vehicle, exchanged no words. Finally, we arrived at our destination. "It is here," the driver said. "Follow the corridor." We were in front of a multifamily dwelling of the kind that were then called *vecindades*. A *vecindad* consisted of densely clustered hovels, often no more than a single room per family, with walls of wood or compressed cardboard and roofs of corrugated sheet metal. Often the tenants were squatters who had settled in an area lacking the most elementary sanitary services. Better-established *vecindades*, such as the one we had come to, were made up of thickly aggregated habitations that had between them winding passages or corridors leading to inner courtyards, or "patios." In the latter stood fountains, or wells, or mere faucets. The precarious water supply, like the sanitary facilities, had to be shared. In the forties, *vecindades* could be found in Mexico City which could match, both in color and squalor, the most baroque descriptions in Eugène Sue's "Les Mystères de Paris" in the nineteenth century. The patios followed one another along the labyrinthine corridors and were numerically identified according to their distance from the street. These dwellings, and the unique life experiences they fostered, became part of the local folklore. The plaintive voice of a crooner intoned the lamentation of unrequited love in a popular song: "*Por vivir en quinto patio, Desprecias mis besos*" ("Because I live in a fifth patio, You despise my kisses").

I descended from the bus ready to obey the driver's instructions. I felt a childish worry that in an implausible fit of irresponsibility the driver might fancy that going back with a single passenger was not worth his while, and abandon me there. To be alone and stranded in that squalid place was a disquieting idea. What followed was still more disconcerting: there was not a soul in sight. Fortunately, the corridor was short, and straight, and I did not need to advance beyond the first patio. The direction that I was supposed to take was marked by mortuary crêpes of white fabric and by white ribbons tied in bows, suspended from the lintels and along the walls. I still had hopes of finding my teacher or some of my classmates in the room I was approaching. Oh, for the reassuring sight of a familiar face, even if it was that of a detested and punitive teacher!

I came at last to the designated place, a room facing the first patio. It was a room made into a mortuary chamber, in whose center a child's coffin had been placed, supported on a step stool. The lid was open. The corpse was that of a toddler who could not have been more than two or three years old. The room was literally bursting with odorous white flowers. Bouquets were densely arrayed everywhere: at the base of the stool, against the walls, lying on a table, in vases, and strewn in heaps upon the floor. It seemed plain that most of the room's furniture had been moved away in order to accommodate the masses of flowers. The eyes of an observer entering the room were drowned in the thickly bunched profusion of coronets and petals, almost all white. And the dominance of this color enhanced the soft pastel blue of the child's coffin, and the greenish complexion of the cadaveric face it contained.

Awareness of death—a vivid realization of the caducity of life and its joys and miseries—provides the strongest motive for metaphysics. It is doubtful whether any man would have ever philosophized, without a consciousness of the immediacy and inevitability of death. At nine years of age one is far removed from any serious philosophical activity but in no way impervious to the awareness of irrevocable death. When this awareness comes, it is felt as a violent wrenching of our deepest being. Schopenhauer saw here the reason that the sudden sight of a human corpse always makes us solemn and grave.

There was no one in the room, apart from me and the lifeless body. No relatives, no mourners, no schoolteachers. Of the scenes that I had anticipated none came to pass. There were no rows of uniformed schoolchildren mounting guard by the coffin, no desolate parents shedding dolorous tears upon the untimely loss of their son. A dead child and I alone shared the silent enclosure. My anxiety grew from this realization—that both of us were as if enfolded in a common space, encased together in a compartment trenchantly divided from the world.

In a country where embalming and the art of "restoration" of cadavers is almost never practiced, the external appearance of my silent companion was, not unexpectedly, loathsome: his face was green and bloated. The unbearable stench of a cadaver in decomposition filled the room, mixed with the emanations of a thousand flowers. I understood that the room had been crammed with flowers in an effort to disguise the nauseating odor of advancing organic decomposition. I also realized what I know now—that there is no quenching such a smell. Pour out the subtlest fragrances that human industry has devised, and you will obtain only a juxta-

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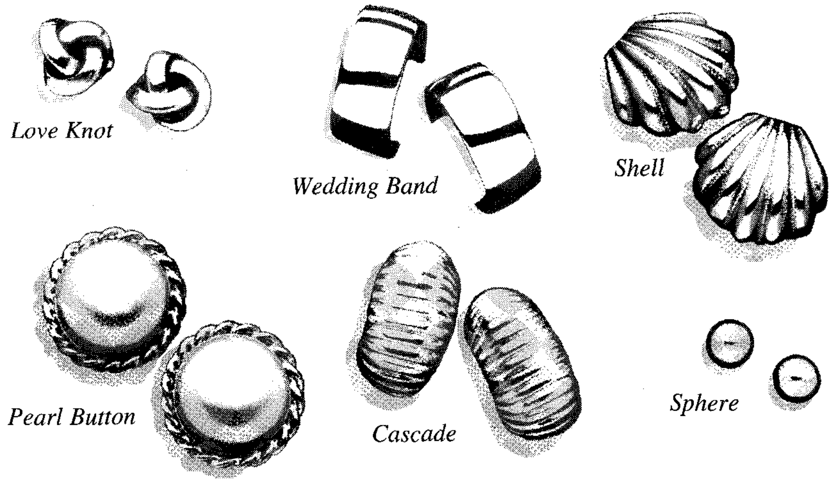

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position of scents, not the predominance of the pleasant over the offensive. Bathe a decomposing cadaver in sweet perfumes, and it will smell of rotting carrion on a bed of roses.

The indescribable foulness revealed to me a new face of death. Until then, the visage of death had been for me a quiet, placid one, barely discernible from sleep. It was the face of historical personages laid out upon biers, surrounded by priests with crucifixes in their hands or by relatives in mournful poses, as they are represented in book illustrations, lithographs, and paintings. It was also the image of obscure men who fall to the ground like broken mannequins in battle scenes of films: a fall that never wholly excludes from the mind of the spectator the possibility that the fallen will rise again in the next scene, like men who wake from sleep. Now death was revealed to me in an altogether different guise: not a passive and solemn form but an actively vexatious one—a cadaver that offends, a dead body still capable of outrage and aggression.

I could not have stayed in the room for more than three minutes; to me, they were three centuries. I experienced a diffuse anguish, an inexpressible anxiety that it would be an oversimplification to equate with being "scared." I was torn between the impulse to flee the place and the sense of duty or the fear of appearing cowardly, which kept me there. At the foot of the supporting stool was a glass jar containing some money, and I deposited in it the few coins that I carried. I returned to the school bus. The motor was still running.

Who was that child? Why was his cadaver left unattended amid a sea of flowers? Where were his parents, his grieving relatives, the neighbors, the children expected to participate in the funeral ceremony? Undoubtedly, answers to these questions could have been supplied, but none were ever revealed to me. When school resumed, the teacher made no mention of the occurrence, nor was he the type of mentor I should have wished to discuss the matter with. My closest friends had not signed up. No one else had attended. My parents knew nothing about what I had experienced, and I would never have troubled them without weightier cause. The extraordinary circumstances surrounding this episode, like the complexity of the feelings it elicited in me, vastly surpassed my childish ability to articulate a coherent, rational interpretation of the affair. Therefore, I was forced to file it raw and unresolved in the archives of memory. Perhaps its only enduring consequence has been to make me see a very personal landscape in the legends and myths about the netherworld. Heroes who, like Orpheus, descend to Hades I represent to myself as ambulating through threatening passageways that resemble the corridors and patios of an old Mexican *vecindad.*

Many years later, my profession was

going to place me—fortunately, with extreme rarity—squarely against the spectacle of decomposing cadavers. For sooner or later, after the heart has ceased to beat, the body will decompose. It is, in fact, no longer a human being but a corpse, and, having acquired a new ontological category, it must join a dialectic to which it was previously alien; namely, that interplay of contrasts in which human nature is opposed to inanimate objects, cleanliness to filthiness, and permanence to decay.

No civilization has been able to face without horror the spectacle of a putrefying cadaver. The ascetics of India found it especially loathsome. They summarized the corpse's three possible fates, according to Jonathan Parry's essay "The End of the Body," in an anthology called "Fragments for a History of the Human Body": "It is eaten as carrion and turns to excrement; it is buried and turns to maggots; or it is burnt and turns to ash." Needless to say, of the three they found the last one the least offensive way to recycle the body's constitutive elements. In Brahmanic thought, cremation is more than ecology-conscious disposal; it is also a sacrificial offering. Accordingly, the lame, disfigured, or deformed are not deemed worthy of the flames and, theoretically, usually are instead given to the cleansing stream of the Ganges. It is the same for spiritual pollution: the sinful would contaminate the fire. Of a corrupt government official in Bihar, suspected of prevarication during life, Parry recounts the tale that his corpse refused to burn despite the liberal smearing of resins and the huge size of the pyre. Conversely, it is a folk belief in India that the faithful wife who immolates herself on her dead husband's pyre ignites spontaneously—virtue as combustibility. I think of the lithograph hanging on the wall of my mother's bedroom, which represents the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the shape of a stylized, playing-card heart, all aflame.

DURING these depressing musings I have wandered into my old neighborhood. It is much changed, but it remains a working-class barrio teeming with children. Before I can negotiate entrance to my former apartment building, I must wait until the tactical offensive of the youngsters' soccer team playing in the street is repelled by the embattled defenses of the adversary team. Some things, I say to myself, remain much the same.

My mother and my uncle occupy the apartment. Both are in their eighties. She is the younger of the two; her brother borders closely on his tenth decade. I knock at the door, and my mother receives me with effusive demonstrations. Although the difference in years is not very pronounced, their states of preservation differ markedly. My uncle became a widower recently, and his bereavement hurt him deeply. I had been told that he had withered swiftly and all too visibly.

As soon as my mother and I sit to chat in the living room, he emerges dressed in his best finery, which he has donned, I believe, for the occasion of my visit. The jacket is clearly too big, and the wrinkled shirt is painfully discordant with the outmoded, shiny neck-

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tie. He is obviously conscious of the ill-fitting, threadbare attire, and over my protestations he begins to apologize: he has lost much weight recently, and has not yet had a chance to renew his wardrobe. Rather untactfully, my mother declares, "He has plenty of good shirts. But he keeps them in a drawer and never wears them. Would you believe it? He says those were the last shirts that his late wife personally ironed for him, and he dares not unfold them."

My uncle is taken aback by the abrupt disclosure of this intimate detail but does not seem upset. He looks genuinely moved at the mere evocation of the cause of his sartorial disarray. Then a sudden shadow grows over his face. Lowering his head, he mutters repeatedly: "A good woman . . . A wonderful woman . . . I tell you, a *good* woman."

I find it difficult not to contrast past memory with present impression. I remembered my uncle as a sanguine, vigorous man. Sentimental he was not. Although of humble birth and very limited education, he made up with daring and resolve for what he lacked in the subtler means of worldly advancement. Intense, brisk, trenchant, and possibly a bit too caustic for his own good, he fell in with the workers' movement. I mean those circles of old-fashioned proletariat advocacy of times gone by, when one could without contradiction wave red flags, preach internationalism, salute the purity of Soviet Leninism, and keep a clear conscience and a straight face—all at the same time. But this involvement worked out badly. One evening, after a rally, he was chased by armed henchmen in the company's pay—"scabs," as he called them—across the company's courtyard and into protracted unemployment.

This happened in the forties. At the time, labor contracts came easily to able-bodied Mexican males who did not mind easing hunger by leaving their country to support the booming postwar economy of the most powerful nation on earth. If emigration patterns are reliable indicators of the matter, acute conflicts between conscience and stomach are usually settled to the benefit of the latter. Accordingly, my uncle joined the hardy crews that picked the fruits born of the same soil that supported the bastions of soulless capitalism and imperialistic domination. As far as I could

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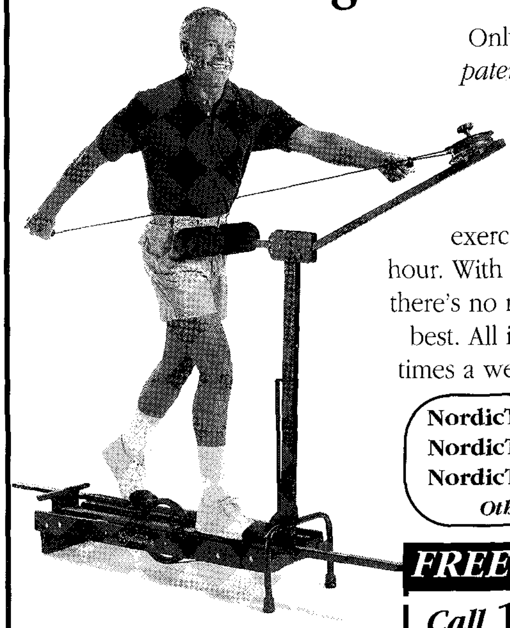
tell, the shock to his socialist conscience was without abiding ill effects.

For more than a decade the contracts were regularly renewed. My uncle picked cotton in Texas, tomatoes in California, potatoes in Iowa, oranges in California, and assorted produce as far north as Montana, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Difficult as it was for us to understand, in those lands the bounty of the earth exploded with varied fruits in the interval between icy crustings.

We saw my uncle sporadically. Quite a ceremony it was when, during his fleeting home visits, he unpacked his hard-earned treasures: alarm clocks with dials that glowed in the dark, still with a Woolworth label; thick jackets bought in Army-surplus stores; battery-operated shortwave radios; toothbrushes attractively packaged in cardboard containers with transparent cellophane windows; and slick fashion magazines, with glossy paper, redolent of fine ink, that featured tall, blond, blue-eyed beauties in swaggering poses. And after the unpacking came what was most dazzling of all—his tales of labor activism. My mother and I would sit and listen to the accounts of his self-abnegation, and how by becoming the trusted man of the foreman he strove to redeem the sad lot of his illiterate and downtrodden brethren. The populist in him was not extinguished, and his enormous vitality continued to support him through the backbreaking, sunup-to-dusk work shifts, the evening rallies, the soapbox harangues, and the distribution of mimeographed sheets from which his coworkers would read, with great difficulty, of the advent of a new era.

The harshness of a migrant worker's life, and the intensity of a labor organizer's, still left him time for a tumultuous series of amorous adventures. He had a total of six wives, on both sides of the border, reckoning common-law and duly certified ones; the last one he survived, the others he irresponsibly abandoned. I thought him a strange mixture of Danton and Casanova—a portentous experiment of nature in which many life-affirming genes had fortuitously converged in a single individual. And now this volcanic man has turned into a decrepit, pitiable being, "sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything," who asks me, in a piping voice, while pointing at his thin frame and



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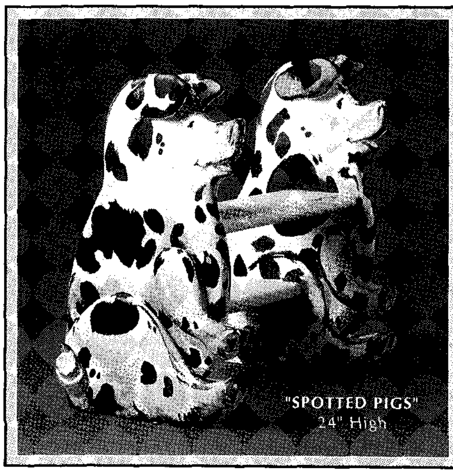

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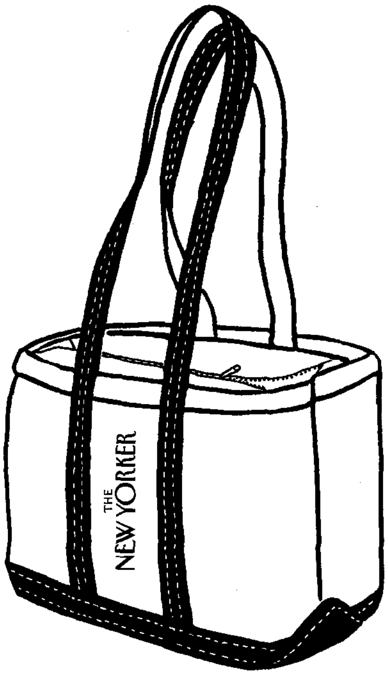

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sagging flesh, "Do you see me? I am only skin and bones, but I cannot finish dying."

Time has worked its relentless erosion. This is the sense of the popular metaphor: death is ensconced in the body, lurks in the interior of the tissues, and by our progressive structural dissolution it becomes more and more apparent each day. As Plato proposed a suprasensible essence behind the surface of things in this world, so death must lie hidden somewhere behind the epidermis of this body. The skeleton, which is the symbol of death, reveals itself slowly; the bony prominences proclaim themselves to the exterior, gradually tightening the skin. Death subtends life, or underlies life, and the action of time consists in peeling away successive layers so as to render death ever more visible.

The layers that remain, those that are not yet degraded, become flabby and yield to the pull of the earth's gravitational force. The story is told by Diogenes Laertius of a Greek philosopher who in advanced old age tripped and fell to the ground. He struck a blow at the earth with his fist in anger while saying, "I come, I come, why dost thou call for me?" The earth tugs on us daily, hour after hour, year after year, until at last we succumb to the pull and she receives us in her lap. For my uncle, the effects of the prolonged gravitational pull are all too evident. I must conclude that his definitive fall is imminent.

Struck by his startling announcement, I pretend not to understand, and he repeats, "Yes, all my friends and contemporaries are long dead. Me, I just can't finish dying." "*No me acabo de morir*"—"I cannot finish dying." The unusual sentence construction suggests to me that my uncle subscribes to the popular belief that life, or at least old age, is a "continuous dying," since he professes not to be able to finish what he has implicitly started. When, exactly, do we begin dying? Perhaps at birth. But in that case the living state would be a long agony—or, more correctly, a series of partial destructions strewn along the road of the individual existence and culminating in total destruction. I don't know what perverse inclination moves me to ask him, "Are you impatient? Would you rather finish?"

My callous impertinence does not alter his polite equanimity, much to his credit. Firmly, very firmly, but without any detectable resentment, he answers, "Of course not. Life is the most important thing we have."

This answer seems to confirm my suspicion that life is not a series of mini-deaths. If it were, the final death could hold no terrors for anyone. It would be one more trivial event in a series of trivial events. My uncle should then be unconcerned, since death might come as a routine happening. Deaths would be without sudden sadness. But, in truth, extreme old age is no half death: it is every bit as vital as the bloom of youth, only different. The tempo is slowed down, the tension has slackened, but the qualitative nature of being is the same: physiologically diminished but ontologically intact. When my uncle confesses that life is important, he declares himself a passenger aboard life's vessel, a believer in life's flow in the direction of becoming. For only death annihilates all sense, all becoming, to replace them with non-sense and absolute cessation.

At the end of the conversation, my uncle falls deeply asleep in his armchair. I say goodbye to my mother and ask her not to disturb him. I leave the apartment with that bitter pang which consists in not knowing when or whether I will see my loved ones again.

I FLY back to Chicago the next day. On the plane, I think more insistently of the two scenes that the cameras did not record than of the many that were captured. Two scenes: One recalled, one immediate. That of a child who feels for the first time the diffuse anguish of death, this of an old man who experiences the supreme lassitude of the last stages of life. The two weigh the same. The youth who yearns to run away from a funeral chamber and the old man who anticipates his own funeral asleep in his armchair: the two are essentially equivalent. Infinite hope with few regrets, or infinite regrets with little hope: the tally is the same. A long stretch of futurity ahead and a brief stream of preterit behind, or a huge trail of preterit and a thin rim of futurity: they have exactly the same worth. Death, which has no hope, no regrets, no preterit, no futurity, no lassitude, no anxiety—death outweighs them both. ♦

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A CASE NOT CLOSED

The White House's decision to bomb Baghdad in June was based on an F.B.I. report concluding that the Iraqi government ordered the alleged plot to assassinate George Bush in Kuwait. The attack was hailed as a crucial foreign-policy victory for Bill Clinton—despite the deaths of eight civilians. But how solid was the F.B.I.'s evidence?

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

On Saturday, June 26, 1993, twenty-three Tomahawk guided missiles, each loaded with a thousand pounds of high explosives, were fired from American Navy warships in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea at the headquarters complex of the Mukhabarat, the Iraqi intelligence service, in downtown Baghdad. The attack was in response to an American determination that Iraqi intelligence, under the command of President Saddam Hussein, had plotted to assassinate former President George Bush during Bush's ceremonial visit to Kuwait in mid-April. It was President Bill Clinton's first act of war.

Three of the million-dollar missiles missed their target and landed on nearby homes, killing eight civilians, including Layla al-Attar, one of Iraq's most gifted artists. The death toll was considered acceptable by the White House; after all, scores of civilians had been killed in the Reagan Administration's F-111 bombing attack on Muammar Qaddafi's housing-and-office complex in Tripoli, Libya, in 1986. Clinton Administration officials acknowledged that they had been "lucky," as one national-security aide put it, in that only three of the computer-guided missiles went off course. Nearly three hundred Tomahawks had been fired during the Gulf War, with a higher rate of inaccuracy.

The media and a majority of the American public saw the American raid on Baghdad as a success, and as evidence that the struggling new President had finally demonstrated toughness when toughness was needed. Public-opinion polls showed that Clinton's approval rating climbed by eleven percentage points on June 27th, the day after the attack; more than two-thirds of those polled approved of the bombing.

President Clinton and those aides who supported his decision may have been right: the Iraqi intelligence service may have developed and put in motion a plot to assassinate George Bush during his triumphant visit to Kuwait to celebrate the Gulf War victory over Iraq. And if such a plot did exist Saddam Hussein may have known of it, or should have known, and thus would have been personally responsible for not preventing it. But my own investigations have uncovered circumstantial evidence, at least as compelling as the Administration's, that suggests that the American government's case against Iraq—as it has been outlined in public, anyway—is seriously flawed.

The Administration, with its well-meaning but floundering leadership, spent two months investigating and debating the alleged assassination attempt, and then ordered the bombing just one day after receiving a written intelligence report on it. That report, delivered on June 24th by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, provided what the President and his advisers concluded was compelling evidence of Iraqi complicity at the top.

A senior White House official recently told me that one of the seemingly most persuasive elements of the report had been overstated and was essentially incorrect. And none of the Clinton Administration officials I interviewed over a ten-week period this summer claimed that there was any empirical evidence—a "smoking gun"—directly linking Saddam or any of his senior advisers to the alleged assassination attempt. The case against Iraq was, and remains, circumstantial. Nonetheless, on June 24th the F.B.I.'s intelligence report was accepted at face value by the President and his senior aides, and some of those aides told me that the mere existence of the report and the expectation that it would be leaked to the press were what drove the President to act. "We had to move quickly," one diplomat said, with rancor. "Bill Safire obviously would have the report for a weekend column." Safire, the *Times* columnist and a frequent critic of Clinton policy, had bedevilled the White House that spring with his ability to obtain restricted information from the Justice Department.

The last-minute Presidential concern over press leaks was valid, for throughout the two months of internal debate over the alleged assassination attempt the White House policymakers were constantly bombarded—and eventually persuaded, perhaps—by news leaks about the evidence against Iraq. The *Wall Street Journal* and the Washington *Post* were among the many newspapers that praised the President's firm leadership in the aftermath of the bombing of Baghdad and his willingness to send potential adversaries a message of American resolve. "Mr. Clinton is learning on the job," the *Journal* said. The newspaper was not reflecting the reality of White House decision-making, however, but merely praising a decision that it and other newspapers had been manipulated to help bring about.

As it happened, the policy was driven not by Bill Clinton and his senior staff but by those men and women in the bureaucracy who from the outset viewed the alleged assassination plot as imposing a responsibility to strike hard at the hated Saddam while also providing a quick fix for the President, who was then mired in controversy over his failure to use force against the Serbs in Bosnia. These aides told everyone in Washington who would listen that bombing Baghdad would improve Clinton's political standing at home and his diplomatic standing in the Middle East. Among the officials making such arguments were two key members of the White House staff—Samuel R. (Sandy) Berger, the deputy assistant to the President for national-security affairs, and Martin Indyk, senior director of the National Security Council Division of Near East and South Asian Affairs. Both men were privately asserting by early May—long before the delivery of the official F.B.I. report—that the intelligence implicating Iraq in the assassination attempt was overwhelming; both men remained strong advocates of the use of force.

The crisis had its beginnings in the last few days of April, when the Kuwaiti government announced that it had arrested a group of seventeen Iraqis and Kuwaitis on charges of "destabilizing" Kuwait; that one Iraqi had confessed, under interrogation, to having been sent by Iraqi intelligence to assassinate George Bush; and that a powerful bomb, weighing nearly two hundred pounds and capable of killing everyone within four hundred yards, had been found hidden in a car that had been driven across the border from Iraq to Kuwait.

The announcement produced little reaction in Washington or anywhere in Europe, essentially because the Kuwaiti government was known for making self-serving pronouncements about its adversaries. Three years ago, during Iraq's six-month occupation of Kuwait, there had been an outcry when a teen-age Kuwaiti girl testified eloquently and effectively before Congress about Iraqi atrocities involving newborn infants. The girl turned out to be the daughter of the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Washington, Sheikh Saud Nasir al-Sabah, and her account of Iraqi soldiers flinging babies out of incubators was challenged as exaggerated both by journalists and by human-rights groups. (Sheikh Saud was subsequently named Minister of Information in Kuwait, and he was the government official in charge of briefing the international press on the alleged assassination attempt against George Bush.) In a second incident, in August of 1991, Kuwait provoked a special session of the United Nations Security Council by claiming that twelve Iraqi vessels, including a speedboat, had been involved in an attempt to assault Bubiyan Island, long-disputed territory that was then under Kuwaiti control. The Security Council eventually concluded that, while the Iraqis had been provocative, there had been no Iraqi military raid, and that the Kuwaiti government knew there hadn't. What did take place was nothing more than a smuggler-versus-smuggler dispute over war booty in a nearby demilitarized zone that had emerged, after the Gulf War, as an illegal marketplace for alcohol, ammunition, and livestock.

The President tended toward caution while some of his aides advocated force, but he issued the bombing order one day after receiving the F.B.I. report.

VICTOR JUHASZ

This year, leaks about Iraqi interference in Kuwait's doings began in early May. On Saturday, May 8th, the Washington *Post* quoted Administration officials and others as saying that there was credible evidence linking the Iraqi government to the assassination attempt. The officials, who were not named, provided the newspaper with three elements of that evidence. One key fact, the *Post* said, was the ease with which the alleged Iraqi assassination team had crossed the border area between Iraq and Kuwait: "U.S. officials said the transit of . . . explosives . . . would have been difficult without official sanction." The newspaper also quoted an official as explaining that the bombs and the detonator recovered in the Iraqi-owned car were "way too sophisticated, involving things too sophisticated, to be just some crazies with a complaint against the president." Finally, the newspaper quoted Clinton Administration officials as saying that they were in the process of tracing the explosives in question "to the source." To further buttress its story, which was splashed across the front page in a banner headline, the *Post* quoted Mohammed Sabah al-Sabah, the new Kuwaiti Ambassador to Washington, as saying that one of the arrested Iraqis had confessed to being "a colonel in the Iraqi secret intelligence service, the Mukhabarat, stationed in Basra." Each of those assertions has now been shown to be factually incorrect.

The *Post* article named Berger and two other high-level Clinton Administration officials—R. James Woolsey, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and Frank G. Wisner, now an Under-Secretary of Defense—as being among those who advocated "direct retribution" against Iraq. By this time, too, Martin Indyk was hard at work, telling selected journalists, "We've got it"—that is, highly reliable intelligence tying Iraq to a plot against Bush. Indyk also said that Saudi Arabia, which had been the most important American and Kuwaiti ally in the Gulf War, was pressuring the

Administration to take harsh action. The Saudi argument to the Clinton Administration, as it was relayed by Indyk, was that "if people think they can get away with this, you'll have no credibility" in the Middle East.

A significant factor in the campaign against Saddam Hussein was simple animosity, stemming from the Iraqi leader's occupation of Kuwait in August of 1990 and his near-suicidal defiance of American pressure, which resulted in the brutal and disastrous Gulf War in early 1991. A former American ambassador in the Middle East recalled his surprise when a colleague, who holds a high post in the Clinton Administration, told him that he had started arguing for retaliation on the day after the first reports of an assassination attempt reached Washington from Kuwait. "I was shocked, because I view him as a normally very responsible and sober person, who understands about power and how to use it," the former ambassador said. "He just hates Saddam—a visceral hatred." Another former senior official said that many officials in the Pentagon and the State Department had become increasingly angry with Iraq in the early months of the Clinton Administration, feeling that Saddam Hussein had been "getting away with things" because of Washington's preoccupation with events in the former Yugoslavia.

The May 8th Washington *Post* story inevitably led to congressional pressure on the White House. Lee H. Hamilton, Democrat of Indiana, who is the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, went on NBC's "Meet the Press" on the morning of Sunday, May 9th, and said that the United States "should retaliate" if the evidence cited by the *Post* was determined to be valid. "We cannot tolerate that kind of an action against a former President of the United States," Hamilton, a political moderate, said. "It's just outrageous."

The official White House view was articulated by Thomas S. Foley, the Democratic Speaker of the House, also on "Face the Nation." Foley urged restraint and caution until there was clear evidence that an assassination attempt had taken place and had been sponsored by Iraq. "It isn't, at least in the public sphere, clear that the evidence is overwhelming or without any ambiguity," he said.

A number of senior White House aides, supporting Foley's view, told me that the President was anything but eager to plunge into a military operation against Iraq without receiving hard evidence and without carefully reviewing his options. "He always wants to see the good and the bad sides of everything," one close associate said. Like any well-trained attorney, the associate added, Clinton wanted to understand "the prosecution case and the defense case."

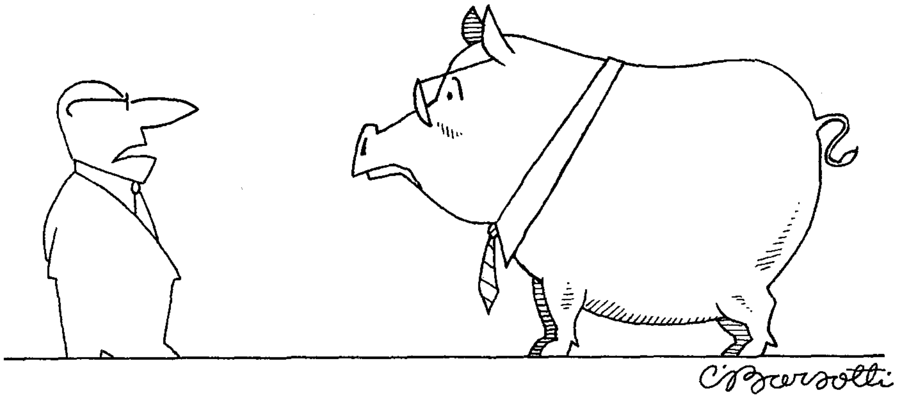
"Darling, let's forget all those things we said about each other on Sally, Oprah, and Joan Rivers."

Another Presidential observer, discussing the President's attitude toward the Kuwaiti allegations, noted, "Clinton is always looking at the downside. He's a pol—a domestic-policy wonk, who does not get off on foreign policy. He was worried about what could go wrong." Clinton's approach was reflected in the official White House response to the Washington *Post* disclosures. "We're still in the middle of the investigation," George Stephanopoulos, the White House communications director, told reporters.

The President was not alone in his caution. Janet Reno, the Attorney General, also had her doubts. "The A.G. remains skeptical of certain aspects of the case," a senior Justice Department official told me in late July, a month after the bombs were dropped on Baghdad. Ms. Reno had, however, approved the F.B.I. report sent to the White House on June 24th.

Two days after Stephanopoulos made his statement, the President's instinct for caution and deliberateness was challenged by a further leak—this time to the Washington bureau of the *Times*. On Tuesday, May 11th, the *Times*, citing "American officials," reported that there was "powerful evidence" pointing to Iraqi sponsorship of the assassination attempt. According to the *Times* report, federal investigators who had travelled to Kuwait found that components of the car bomb discovered by the Kuwaiti police were "almost exactly the same" as those of Iraqi car bombs recovered by American intelligence during the Gulf War. That assertion, too, was incorrect.

Two weeks later, what amounted to open warfare broke out among various factions in the government on the issue of who had done what in Kuwait. Someone gave a Boston *Globe* reporter access to a classified C.I.A. study that was highly skeptical of the Kuwaiti claims of an Iraqi assassination attempt. The study, prepared by the C.I.A.'s Counter Terrorism Center, suggested that Kuwait might have "cooked the books" on the alleged plot in an effort to play up the "continuing Iraqi threat" to Western interests in the Persian Gulf. Neither the *Times* nor the *Post* made any significant mention of the *Globe* dispatch, which had been written by a Washington correspondent named Paul Quinn-Judge, although the story cited



"Basic economics—sometimes the parts are worth more than the whole."

specific paragraphs from the C.I.A. assessment. The two major American newspapers had been driven by their sources to the other side of the debate.

Also in late May, the *Post* obtained a copy of a speech that Martin Indyk delivered before the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, in which he said that the Clinton Administration's conclusion was that the leadership of Iraq would remain hostile to American interests and aims for the foreseeable future. The Administration does not "seek or expect a reconciliation with Saddam Hussein's regime," Indyk said. Before joining the White House, Indyk had served as executive director of the institute, which was established in 1985, with financial backing from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. This organization is considered the strongest pro-Israel lobby in Washington.

On June 10th, the *Post* returned anew to the alleged Iraqi plot, reporting once again that "the Clinton Administration has found evidence implicating the Iraqi government in a plot to assassinate former President George Bush." The *Post* further quoted its sources, described as American officials and senior intelligence analysts, as saying that, despite the consensus on Iraqi involvement, no final judgment would be issued by the government until after the trial of the alleged assassination plotters, which had begun on June 5th in Kuwait.

By late June, the White House had lost any semblance of control over the media debate, and it was widely known among Washington journalists that the F.B.I.'s final report would conclude that Iraq and Saddam Hussein himself were directly involved in the assassination attempt. "FOR THE PRESIDENT, IT'S DECISION TIME ON ATTACKING IRAQ," a *Wall Street Journal* headline announced on June 23rd. The story stated, correctly, "Within the next few days, a confidential report will hit President Clinton's desk, pushing him toward one of the toughest decisions of his young presidency: whether to order new military action against Iraq." In discussing the President's options, the article noted, "There are few actions against Iraq that would arouse strong domestic opposition, and little reason to think Iraqi air defenses yet pose much of a deterrent." The *Times* weighed in on the eve of the bombing, with Thomas L. Friedman, its expert on the Middle East, writing that a plot against George Bush and the arrest of Muslim militants accused of plotting terrorist attacks in New York City "are beginning to pose a serious foreign policy question for President Clinton: How long can his Administration get by with responding to these incidents by saying, 'We're looking into it.' "

WHEN Clinton finally acted, on the afternoon of Saturday, June 26th, he was not leading the nation, as was widely assumed and reported, but merely following the path of least bureaucratic and political resistance. He had authorized the bombing the day before, barely twenty-four hours after the well-publicized F.B.I. report arrived in the White House. The President, who had served as Attorney General in Arkansas, and his aides, many of whom were experienced attorneys and experts at evaluating evidence, took the F.B.I.'s assessment at face value, although it was that agency's planning and intelligence which had given the Presidency its worst public moments in the aftermath of the ill-conceived F.B.I. tear-gas assault on the redoubt of the cult leader David Koresh, in Waco, Texas, which led to the deaths of eighty-six cult members, including twenty-four children.

In a televised speech to the nation on Saturday night, Clinton explained that he had been presented with "compelling evidence that there was in fact a plot to assassinate former President Bush. And that this plot . . . was directed and pursued by the Iraqi intelligence service." The President strongly suggested that Saddam Hussein was personally responsible: "Saddam has repeatedly violated the will and conscience of the international community, but this attempt at revenge by a tyrant against the leader of the world coalition that defeated him in war is particularly loathsome and cowardly. . . . The Iraqi attack against President Bush was an attack against our country and against all Americans."

Clinton's staff, seeking, not unnaturally, to maximize any possible political advantage from the bombing, treated the Tomahawk attack on Baghdad as a personal triumph for the President. Aides told reporters that the President, having made his address and received early damage-assessment reports, watched a movie with his wife, Hillary, and then got a solid eight hours of sleep. The President was said to be "relaxed and calm." On his way to church services the next morning, he expressed regret over the loss of life but added, "I feel quite good about what transpired. I think the American people should feel good." The White House also found cause for celebration in the fact that the Saturday-night bombing had come as a surprise to the media. "ADMINISTRATION FINDS JUST KEEPING A SECRET CAN BE A TRIUMPH," one headline proclaimed. There was, the article said, "a near-defiant sense of pride" among the President's staff, and a "buoyant mood." W. Anthony Lake, the President's national-security adviser, and Sandy Berger, Lake's deputy, were warmly praised for their handling of the operation.

At a background briefing in the White House late on Saturday night, Lake explained that the President had concluded that the failed assassination attempt in Kuwait, though it had taken place in mid-April—two months earlier—amounted to "a real and present danger," and that "if we failed to act and act now, the Iraqis might continue attempting such acts of state-sponsored terrorism." The American missile launchings were initiated, he said, under the self-defense provisions of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which give member nations the right to respond in self-defense to armed attacks. (Lake did not say, however, that most legal authorities note that the threat must be instant and overwhelming and leave no moment for deliberation.) Lake also said that the President had ordered the attack without intending "to pass individual judgment" on the Kuwaitis and Iraqis then being tried for the alleged assassination attempt. He did not try to explain how a Presidential determination that Iraq was guilty of ordering the assassination of George Bush, and the subsequent bombing of Baghdad, could fail to escape the notice of judicial officials in Kuwait.

As the briefing continued, the national-security adviser, accompanied by Philip Heymann, deputy attorney general, and Admiral William Studeman, deputy director of the C.I.A., outlined the "compelling evidence" that sealed the government's case against Iraq. And much of the material provided that night to the press was dramatically made public the next day at the United Nations by Madeleine Albright, the American Ambassador to the U.N.

Lake and his colleagues spoke first about what they said was forensic evidence tying crucial components of the bomb recovered in Kuwait, including its remote-control detonator, to bombs previously recovered by the American intelligence community and known to have been put together by the Iraqi intelligence service. Here Lake was essentially restating what the *Times* had reported in its May 11th story—that there was unmistakable evidence showing that the components recovered in Kuwait had been built by the same person or persons who built the Iraqi bombs. In other words, the soldering techniques and modifications in the Kuwaiti car bomb—a characteristic way of twisting wires, for example—amounted to a "signature" linking it to a specific designer or technician who had also worked on Iraqi bombs.

Lake and his colleagues then discussed what they said was the second key category of evidence—the suspects themselves. Early in the inquiry, the F.B.I. had sent a team of agents to Kuwait to interview the fourteen Iraqi and Kuwaiti citizens who had been formally charged in the case, and there had been at least one more follow-up visit. The F.B.I. eventually concluded that none of the defendants, including the Iraqi who confessed to having been ordered by Iraqi intelligence agents to kill Bush, had been beaten or in any other way coerced to give evidence. No physical evidence of torture was found.

In an interview in early August at the White House, a senior official told me, "When you listen to them all"—the various defendants—"it clearly establishes that the car went from Basra to Kuwait when Bush was there. I think it is beyond a reasonable doubt that the intent was to kill Bush." Basra, the largest city in southern Iraq, is a hundred miles from Kuwait City.

However, other knowledgeable officials in the Clinton Administration, as well as current and former members of the intelligence community, had provided me with information that challenged the official's confident assess-

ANTLION

Beneath your shoe soles there's a beautiful
concavity of sand, a symmetrical
funnel the width of a small boy's thumb.
It looks expertly smooth. Precarious
sand grains have been set to slide
whenever a plodding ant's insouciance
pitches it down that soft declivity.
The owner of the pit abides down there,
a drab predator the color of
quarry rock, old spackle, gypsum, slate;
earth-colored, with the shadows of the earth,
it snugs down in the hollow of its snare.

At night, in childhood, I would sometimes dream
of the panicky scrambles of a slipping ant,
its scurrying despair that swept it down
irresistibly along the volatile sand.
The way that dreams deceive you the ant fell,
and I, asleep, felt falling, too,
through filmy floorboards, into avalanche
as the heart-stopped terror of my helpless dream
tossed me to the soft mouth of the pit.

There, with bristling jaws, the antlion
wiggled out of ambush, rushed to hug
me, its frantic victim, in its grip. That,
too, had the horrible embrace of dream
where you choke those you love, or they choke you,
and everything takes place mechanically
despite the shrieked beseeching of your will.

Even in dream I couldn't follow down
to where the flinching victim had been tugged
beneath the dirt, and yet
the antlion's prompt return was even more
terrible for being miniature:
there's a proprietary fussiness,
meticulous, almost suburban, as
the little killer scrapes its whirlpool smooth.

—Eric Ormsby

ment. My examination of what is known about the recovered car bombs and of the F.B.I.'s interviews with the alleged assassins in Kuwait raises fundamental questions concerning the validity of the government's evidence, how prudently and objectively it was handled, and how the President and the men around him—experienced as many of them were in making legal judgments—reached their standard of "reasonable doubt."

THE most glaring weakness of the Administration's case is its assertion that the remote-control firing device found in the Kuwaiti car bomb has the same "signature" as previously recovered Iraqi bombs. In making its case, the Administration released a series of color photographs comparing, among other things, the circuit boards of the radio-controlled firing device seized in Kuwait and the circuit boards of what was said to be a similar Iraqi device. The photographs were made public by Ambassador Albright. "Even an untrained eye can see that these are identical except for the serial numbers," she said, holding up one of the photographs of the two devices. "Next, we have a similar comparison of the insides of the two firing devices. . . . As you can see, the selection of the components and the construction techniques in the two devices—including soldering, the use of connectors, and the wiring techniques, et cetera—are also identical."

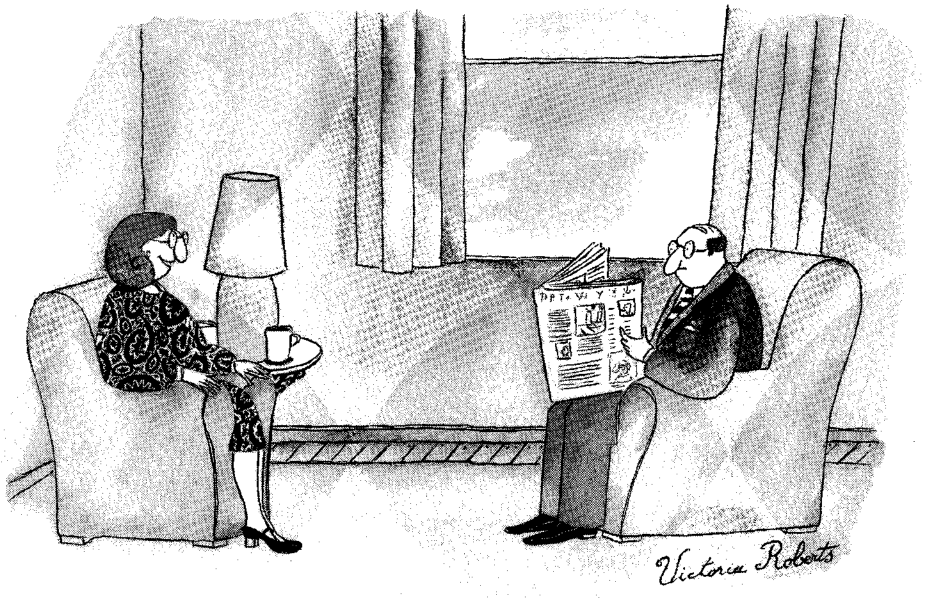
The Iraqi government heatedly denied the Administration's allegations, but most reporters—and the public—found the photographs, with their obvious similarity, convincing. One notable exception was the editorial page of the *Times*, which raised questions about the "compelling evidence" cited by Clinton and also about Albright's assurances that it was the "firm judgment" of the C.I.A. that Iraqi intelligence was involved in the alleged assassination attempt. The information Ms. Albright presented "was not conclusive enough for a reasonable citizen to join her in being 'highly confident' that force—rather than criminal trials and diplomatic measures—was the wisest course," the *Times* noted, and it went on, "Let's hear the evidence, rather than assertions of officials who say they have it."

The *Times* editorial led to no reassessment by the public or by the newspaper's Washington bureau, whose staff had so avidly reported the firm judgment of some members of the Administration that Iraq had sought to kill former President Bush. There is no published evidence known to me of any effort by the *Times* to verify independently the Administration's specific claims against Iraq. No reporter, for example, has written of getting in touch with any of the many independent experts in electrical engineering and bomb forensics to ask what they thought of the photographs released by the White House.

When I asked seven such experts about those photographs last summer, they all told me essentially the same thing: the remote-control devices shown in the White House photographs were mass-produced items, commonly used for walkie-talkies and model airplanes and cars, and had not been modified in any significant way. The experts, who included former police and government contract employees and also professors of electrical engineering, agreed, too, that the two devices had no "signatures." They said there was no conceivable way that the Clinton Administration, given the materials made public at the United Nations, could assert that the remote-control devices had been put together by the same Iraqi technician.

The fact that the two devices were similar is simply not that significant, I was told by Donald L. Hansen, a twenty-eight-year veteran of the bomb squad of the San Francisco Police Department. Hansen, who has served as the director of the International Association of Bomb Technicians and Investigators, is now an instructor at the State Department's school for foreign police officers, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and is widely considered to be one of the top forensics experts in the field. "They're very generic devices," he told me, after analyzing the photographs of the electronic circuit boards. "To establish a signature, you've got to find unique characteristics. It's not the equipment itself—there are millions of them. You can buy instruction manuals"—for the construction of the devices—"in New York and Chicago, and the instructions could be exactly the same. But that doesn't mean that the two were built by the same man. There are no signs of modification. If these circuit boards are what they're hanging their signature issue on, they're really stretching the envelope. All they can say is there's a strong similarity."

Another expert, Paul A. Eden, who is an electrical engineer at the University of Miami, estimated that individual components of the devices were manufactured no later than 1983. He concluded that both mechanisms were mass-produced, most likely in Taiwan, or Japan, or South Korea, and were of a type sold all over the world. "I saw nothing that would make them any different from anything bought off the shelf from any electronics store," he said. "The design is used by everybody in the world. All it does is receive a signal and decode a tone. I can't see anything that would make it say, 'Yes, this was done by the



"Yes, Harold, I do speak for all women."

same person.' " Eden, who has nearly forty years of experience in electronics and now runs a satellite field station for the university, suggested that the Clinton Administration had been "grasping at straws" in its presentation at the United Nations. He also said that he objected to the White House's notion, repeatedly expressed by Anthony Lake and others in their briefings and public statements, that the car bomb found in Kuwait was extremely sophisticated. "Anybody with half an ounce of electronics training could have done what they did and make something go boom."

A third expert, Robert H. Shaw, who has worked as a computer engineer and a systems analyst in the "black," or classified, community in Washington, expressed disappointment that the Administration had relied on "signature" to justify the bombing of Iraq. "There's no signature," Shaw told me. "Just a close coincidence that worked real bad for Saddam. You couldn't make a case," he said, referring to the legal implications of a signature finding. "I wouldn't take this to the World Court. They might throw it out and make you pay court costs. I would have just said, 'We got one, and the other guy's looked like it. They're similar enough, so goodbye Saddam.' "

In interviews with me in late July, however, two law-enforcement officials who played important roles in assembling the government's case against Iraq stated emphatically that the standards used for assessing the evidence were the same as those used in criminal investigations and prosecutions. "We had a hands-on examination by our bomb expert," said Neil Gallagher, chief of the F.B.I.'s counterterrorism section, and he went on to say that the bureau had held the expert to the standards that would be used "if he were to testify in court." Similarly, Mark Richard, a deputy assistant attorney general, told me that "the F.B.I. presented its case to Justice as if it were in front of a very skeptical A.U.S.A."—assistant United States attorney.

The problem with such statements is that the investigative findings of the F.B.I. and the Justice Department ended up being exposed only to a political process, with senior White House planners who were worried about domestic reaction, press spin, and international reaction, and were also subjected to pressure from selective leaks to the news media. The far more rigorous procedures associated with the federal-court process—trial by jury and questioning by opposing counsel—were not used. If they had been, the outcome might have been different. In one recent bomb-signature case in which federal bomb experts testified, the results were disastrous for the government's witnesses.

This happened on July 19th, when the signature issue was the focus of a hearing held, with the jury excluded, in the United States District Court trial, in Boston, of Thomas A. Shay, who was accused of conspiring in 1991 to plant a car bomb in an attempt to kill his father; a Boston policeman had been killed while attempting to defuse the device. Shay's co-defendant, Alfred W. Trenkler, had been charged with unlawful possession of an explosive connected with a bombing in 1986. A federal bomb expert from the Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms testified that he had been able to match the signature of the bomb that Shay was alleged to have planted to the 1986 bomb that Trenkler was alleged to have built. A second A.T.F. witness claimed that a computer analysis of more than fourteen thousand bomb incidents had further established the link between the 1986 and 1991 devices. The defense witness for Shay was Donald Hansen, the former San Francisco bomb-squad officer, and he repeatedly made the point that the A.T.F. forensic experts had emphasized only the similarities between the two devices, ignoring the many differences. Hansen told the court that there were only generic similarities between the two bombs—that his examination found "no particular method of twisting wires or no real distinct technique employed."

In a bench ruling the next morning, Judge Rya W. Zobel said that the government could not put forward any testimony in an attempt to link the 1986 and 1991 bombings. The two devices were similar, "without question, but I am not persuaded that they are identical," Judge Zobel concluded. "That is, I do not think, and find, that it is not so unusual and distinctive as to be like a signature."

When I spoke with Nancy Gertner, Shay's attorney, this summer, she recalled that before the judge's ruling there had repeatedly been newspaper stories citing federal officials as saying "that these were signature bombs." She added, "It's very, very frightening that foreign policy is being made on this."

In the spring and summer, I had a series of background conversations with an old friend who is now serving as an intelligence analyst inside the government. The analyst, who has seen much of the classified reporting on the alleged assassination attempt, conceded in our most recent talk that a stringent cross-examination of the F.B.I.'s experts would have uncovered a number of distinctions between the two bombs, the most significant being that the two-hundred-pound car bomb carefully hidden in Kuwait was dramatically different in appearance from all previously known Iraqi car bombs. Most Iraqi car bombs that have been recovered by the American intelligence community are extremely primitive devices—essentially, the analyst said, "sticks of dynamite wrapped together, with a timer and a detonator." The bomb found in Kuwait, he added, used a state-of-the-art plastic explosive that, while safer than dynamite to handle, was far more powerful.

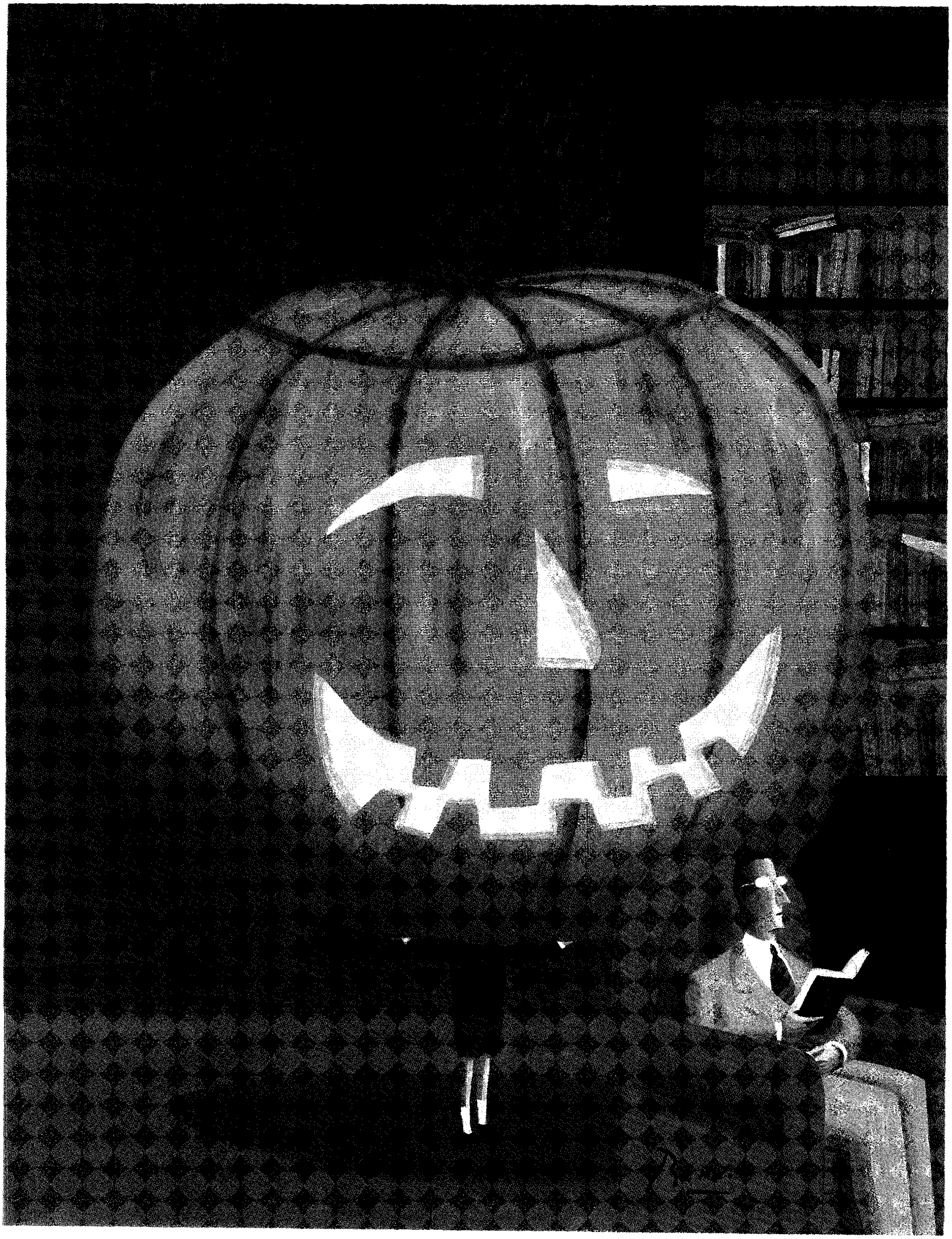
The analyst told me that, nonetheless, he was convinced that the bomb in Kuwait was of the same manufacture as the Iraqi bombs, because they all had the same components. "Why get into signature?" he asked rhetorically. "It's a technical issue, and the people handling it in the White House didn't have the expertise. It's like you and me talking about nuclear physics. We know just enough to endanger ourselves. The White House oversold the signature issue"—in its press briefings. "They didn't understand what they were selling."

I relayed the analyst's complaints to a senior White House official in a telephone conversation in late July, and, during an extended interview a few weeks later, the official acknowledged that he had raised the signature issue anew with the F.B.I. He was subsequently informed, he went on, that "you could not judge signature on the basis of the pictures" that the White House released after the bombing.

"I'm not a forensics expert," the official went on, with a shrug. "At some

ARTIST'S EASEL • BY BENOÎT VAN INNIS

BOO



"I guess it's no big deal anymore."

• •

point, you have to rely on the F.B.I.'s technical expertise. You have to push them hard and probe them about anything that seems to be unclear or uncertain. By the end of their investigation, there was no question in their minds that this car bomb came from Iraqi intelligence." He believed the F.B.I., the official said, and he added that there were aspects of the car bomb and its trigger mechanism that were not made public. When I asked why not, he said, "We're not going to show what parts of their bomb make it similar to bombs coming from Iraqi intelligence. Why let Iraq know where the thumbprint is?"

The F.B.I.'s Neil Gallagher had told me, similarly, "What was made public was not the best case. There are other photographs." He refused to describe the additional evidence, and said that it would be impossible to permit outsiders to view the unpublished photographs or other data.

In subsequent interviews, officials sought to explain Gallagher's cryptic comment by revealing that some of the Iraqi bombs and detonators used in the F.B.I.'s analysis of the Kuwaiti car bomb had not been obtained in Iraq, as had been widely assumed and reported; they had been retrieved by the American intelligence community during a clandestine entry into an Iraqi Embassy in the Middle East during the Gulf War. In addition, the F.B.I. had access to components from other suspected Iraqi bombs that had been recovered in recent years from the Philippines, after an explosion at an American cultural center in Manila, and from Indonesia, where an unexploded bomb was found in a flower pot at the residence of the American Ambassador in Jakarta. The detonators in those devices and in the Kuwaiti car bomb were "put together the same way," one American official said.

Of course, the fact that the Iraqi bombs were clandestinely recovered does not alter the possibility that the various components were similar because they were similarly mass-produced, or rule out the possibility that the car bomb and detonator found in Kuwait were planted there by Kuwaitis. (Iraqi-manufactured bombs and detonators surely were abandoned in large quantities, along with tanks and weapons, after the American liberation of Kuwait in early 1991.) Nor does it have any bearing on the "smoking gun" issue of the bombing of Baghdad.

In fact, an American diplomat who was involved in the discussions of Saddam's role told me in an interview this summer that the linking of high officials in the Iraqi intelligence service to the events in Kuwait was simply "a political judgment," based, in large measure, on the pattern of behavior of the men arrested in the incident. "I don't think Saddam ordered it," the diplomat said, "but it was an Iraqi-intelligence-service attempt to assassinate an American President." Mark Richard also acknowledged, in an interview, that I was in possession of "ninety-nine per cent of the facts." Richard, a distinguished career Justice Department official, who has been assigned to many of the government's most difficult international criminal cases, explained that the final determination of Iraqi complicity in the alleged assassination attempt was a result of "process"—the careful analysis of possible scenarios—and did not stem from any specific information.

Moreover, other current and former high-ranking officials with access to intelligence, whose information has been extremely reliable in the past, specifically told me that the National Security Agency, which is responsible for electronic intelligence, had produced no significant high-level intercepts from Iraq in years. American intelligence experts have concluded that the Reagan Administration's policy of providing satellite and communications intelligence to Iraq in the mid-nineteen-eighties had an unwelcome side effect: the Iraqi intelligence service learned how to hide its important communications from the N.S.A.'s many sensors.

Finally, my old friend inside the intelligence community has repeatedly expressed his amazement at the notion, suggested by the White House, that the F.B.I.'s final report to the President on June 24th contained new and definitive information. "There's a big mystery as to why we finally went Saturday," he said a few days after the bombing. "It's not as if we suddenly had more intelligence driving it. There was nothing else. What we knew Saturday night we knew two months ago."

IN essence, the Clinton Administration, by its suggestion of still secret intelligence, is saying "Trust me" in response to the lingering questions and doubts about the forensic evidence linking the Kuwaiti car bomb to Iraq. The Administration is also saying "Trust me" in its assurances that the account provided by the Kuwaiti government was accurate. Fourteen men are now on trial in Kuwait, at least ten of them facing possible death sentences, for their role in the alleged assassination attempt. In late

July, the trial proceedings were suspended until the end of October.

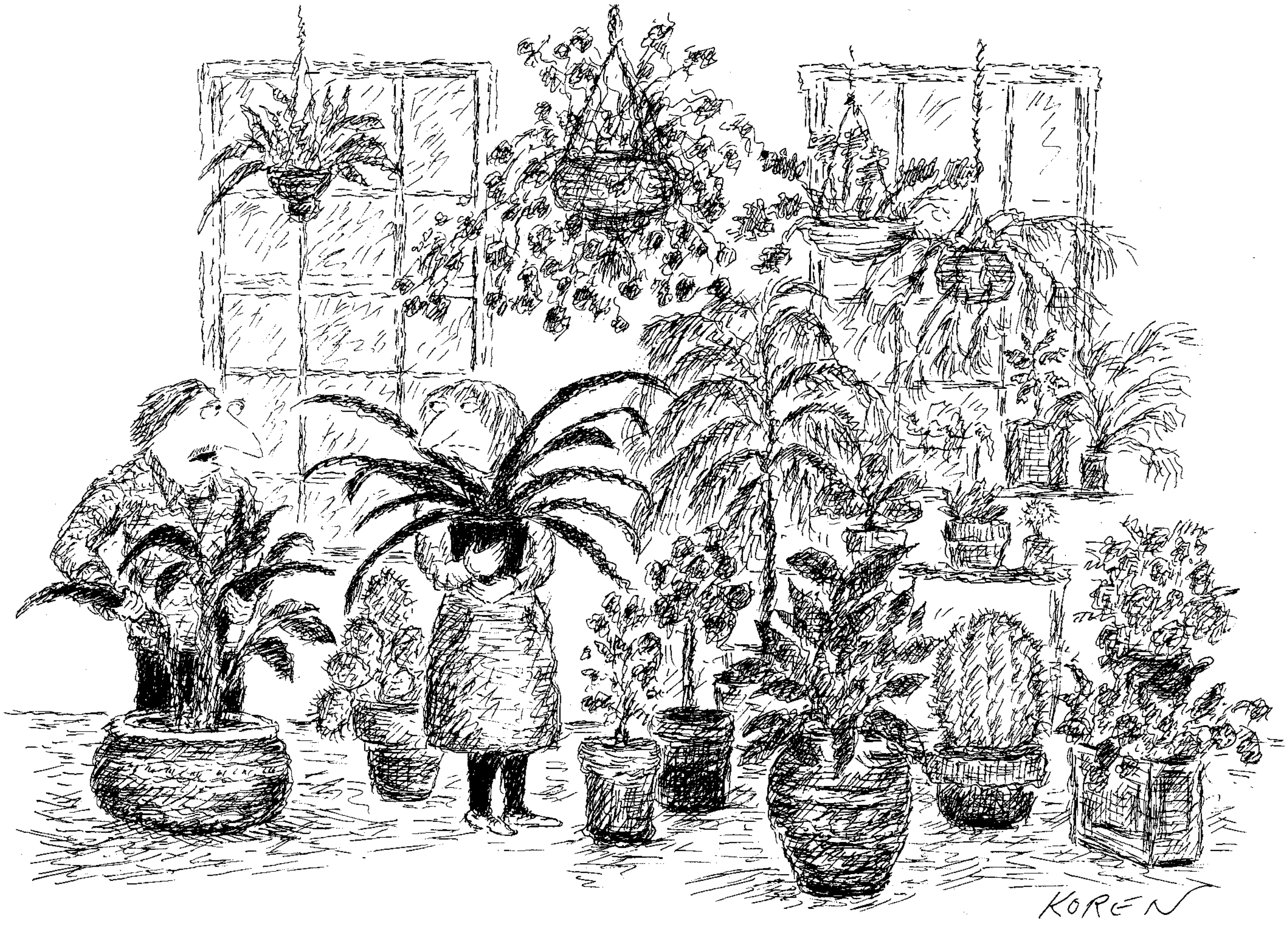
There is now, in fact, critical information that is known to the F.B.I. and the White House and has not been made public: that there was a crucial four-day gap between the arrest of the alleged assassins and their first mention of a car bomb and a plot to kill an American President.

The key members of the alleged Iraqi assassination team were seized while they were walking in the desert on the evening of Thursday, April 15th, one day before George Bush concluded his visit to Kuwait. Some of them had spent as many as three days roaming through Kuwait City, and had spent their nights in different apartments. The suspects had smuggled whiskey across the border, and there had evidently been much drinking during that time. No alcohol is sold legally in Kuwait, a Muslim state, and there is a booming black market between Iraq and Kuwait; there is also a steady flow of people and vehicles—all illicit—between Basra and Kuwait City. At least six of the seventeen men initially arrested had simply been ferried across the border, for a fee, and were en route to visit friends and relatives in Kuwait. Such trips were routine before the Gulf War. Four days after the men were jailed, according to their defense attorneys, one of them, Wali al-Ghazali, told the Kuwaiti authorities that he had been sent into Kuwait by Iraqi intelligence to kill Bush. A second prisoner, Ra'ad al-Assadi, testified that he knew that their car, a Toyota Land Cruiser, had been carrying a bomb. It was only at that point that the Kuwaiti authorities searched the Land Cruiser, which was in police custody, and found the bomb.

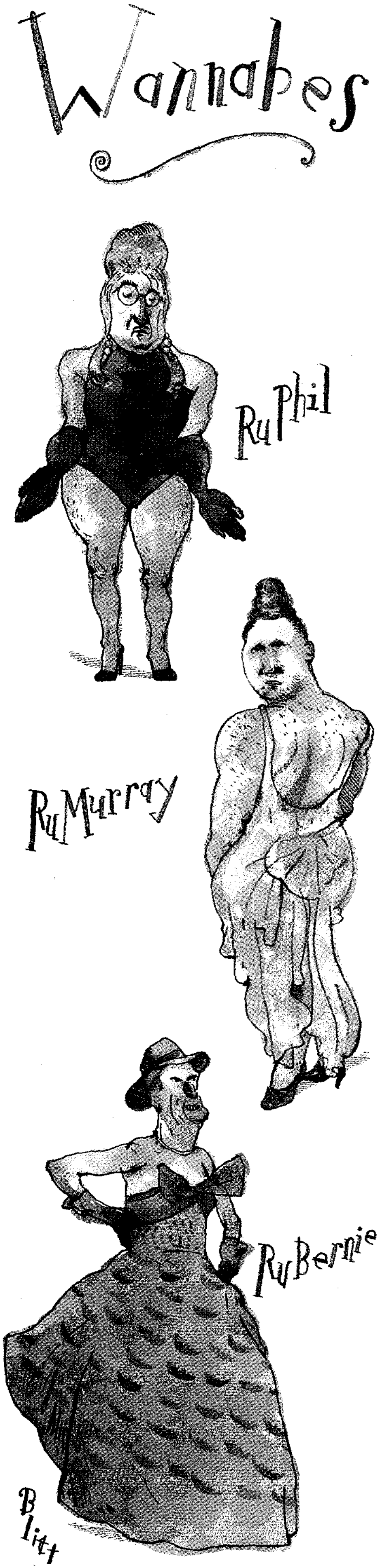
Clinton Administration officials acknowledged that the long delay between the arrests and the recovery of the bomb lent weight to the possibility of Kuwaiti duplicity—something that had been encountered more than once in the past. "It'd be foolish to suggest that these were issues that didn't occur to us," Mark Richard said. "We played it against all scenarios: Did Kuwait do it? Make it up? Did Saddam do it? Was it some rogue operation? This was not a rush to judgment." In the end, it was decided that Kuwait had more to lose by falsifying an assassination plot—and being exposed in doing so—than Saddam Hussein did by sending in a team of amateurs who might succeed or might not.

Saddam has repeatedly made moves against his best interests—his decision to invade Kuwait was one of them—and nothing can be ruled out. Yet the White House, in working through its scenarios, apparently did not include the fact that by mid-April Saddam was engaged in desperate negotiations with the United Nations concerning the U.N. ban on importing Iraqi oil. The Saddam regime was bankrupt, and could not feed its people without hard currency and credits obtained from foreign oil sales.

Another factor, also ignored in the White House deliberations, was President-elect Clinton's assertion, made shortly before he took office, that he—unlike George Bush—was not "obsessed" with Saddam Hussein. In an interview on January 13th with the *Times*, Clinton said that he could imagine maintaining a normal diplomatic rela-



"May I remind you that our prenuptial agreement called for me to take the plants?"



tionship with the Iraqi leader. "All he has to do is change his behavior," Clinton said. He subsequently disavowed his statements, but the C.I.A.'s Counter Terrorism Center, in its debunking of the alleged assassination attempt, reported, nonetheless, that the Kuwaiti government had expressed "frustration" because of the failure of the Clinton Administration and its European allies to take a tougher line against Iraq. The Kuwaiti leadership also feared, the C.I.A. concluded, as cited in the Boston *Globe*, that Clinton might abandon Kuwait in favor of better relations with Saddam Hussein. Kuwait, the report said, "has a clear incentive to play up the continuing Iraqi threat."

Also open to question is the F.B.I.'s conclusion that none of the defendants were beaten or coerced after their arrest. The F.B.I. rested its case on the fact that its agents did not personally see any signs of mistreatment. No medical examinations of the men were conducted, officials conceded, nor were lie-detector tests used. The F.B.I.'s assessment may be correct, but it has to be weighed against other evidence.

On July 3rd, the fourth day of the trial in Kuwait City, Ali Khdair Baddai, who, at seventy-three, was the oldest defendant, testified that he had been severely beaten after his arrest, according to the German news agency D.P.A. In a dispatch filed with D.P.A., a freelance journalist named Miriam Amie, the only American reporter who has attended the trial regularly thus far, quoted Baddai as stating that when he was arrested the police "hit me in the head and on my side," and going on to say, "I was bleeding over my eyes. They beat me and somebody kicked me in the side." On being asked by the presiding judge why he had not complained earlier about the beatings, Baddai responded, according to Amie, "Every day I wanted to complain to you. But then I said no." Asked by the judge why he had confessed to smuggling, he said, "Since the police beat me, I told them to write anything and I would sign it." Despite his signed guilty plea, he publicly proclaimed his innocence from the witness stand. In a subsequent interview, Amie told me that Wali al-Ghazali, who has repeatedly told the court and the F.B.I. that he was ordered by Iraqi intelligence to assassinate Bush, showed up on the first day of the trial, in June, with "a fresh scar on his forehead and a blackened nail on his thumb," and she added, "No one could talk to him." Ra'ad al-Assadi, one of the two major defendants in the case (the other being al-Ghazali), told the media after Baddai's testimony that he, too, had been beaten.

The defendants' claims were repeated by Najeeb I. al-Waqayan, the attorney for two of them. "Definitely they were beaten," al-Waqayan told me during an interview in Kuwait in July. "This is the way of the Kuwaiti police." Al-Waqayan, who studied law at San Diego State University and is one of three privately retained defense attorneys in the case (the other lawyers were retained by the state), also said that he had been unable to confer privately with his clients until the first day of the trial.

Questions about the use of torture in Kuwaiti prisons and fair trials in Kuwaiti courts have been raised often since the end of the Gulf War by two of the world's leading human-rights groups—Amnesty International, whose headquarters are in London, and Human Rights Watch, of New York. In November of 1991, Amnesty International issued a statement saying that it had "received reports that many of the people being detained by the Kuwaiti authorities had been ill-treated and tortured," and adding, "Amnesty International delegates had personally interviewed and medically examined prisoners who bore signs of torture." The group has issued a number of special reports about the trial of the alleged assassins, noting that if they are convicted "twelve of the defendants may be sentenced to death," and that "the organization is also concerned that the necessary measures to protect the defendants from torture or ill-treatment during interrogation may not have been taken, and that 'confessions' extracted under duress may later be used to convict them." Similarly, Human Rights Watch, in its World Report roundup for 1992, concluded that "arbitrary arrest and detention are still prevalent" in Kuwait, and "torture remains common."

Finally, in interviews, former American diplomatic officials and intelligence officers who had served in the Middle East expressed amusement and amazement at the F.B.I.'s categorical assurances that none of the defendants were tortured. "Either the investigators were idiots or they were lying," said James E. Akins, a former United States Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, who is now a consultant in the Middle East and elsewhere. "It boggles the imagination. There's no way the Kuwaitis would not have tortured them. That's the way the Kuwaitis are, as anybody who knows the Kuwaitis or the Middle East can tell you."

PRECISELY what did happen in Kuwait during George Bush's ceremonial visit remains in dispute, with senior officials in the White House, the Justice Department, and the F.B.I. acknowledging that the assassination plot had something of an Abbott-and-Costello quality. "You could say these guys were really not that well trained," one counterintelligence official told me, with a laugh. "Not exactly like Chuck Norris coming across the border. More like 'The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight.' "

The story begins with Wali al-Ghazali, a male nurse from the Iraqi holy city of An Najaf, who testified in the trial that he had been approached in early April—roughly a week before the scheduled Bush visit—by an Iraqi intelligence agent while at work and pressured to take part in the assassination mission against Bush. The next day, he was taken to a garage and given a briefing on the car bomb and its remote-control components, and was also provided with a suicide belt and a photograph of a building at Kuwait University where Bush was expected to make an appearance. In case all else failed, al-Ghazali said, he was to put on the belt, get as close to Bush as possible, and detonate it—blowing up both the former President and himself.

His chief collaborator, al-Ghazali testified, was Ra'ad al-Assadi, who was the owner of a coffee shop in Basra and an acknowledged longtime smuggler of alcohol, arms, and other goods into Kuwait City. Al-Assadi was also one of many people in the Basra area who operated what amounted to an informal bus service across the surprisingly open border between Iraq and Kuwait. A round trip—usually for a weekend—cost each passenger about three hundred dollars. Being a smuggler, al-Assadi, not unexpectedly, knew many Iraqi police and intelligence officials, and he testified that he was paid about four hundred and twenty dollars in advance and given merchandise—five cases of whiskey and six kilos of what he was told was hashish—in return for participation in the al-Ghazali mission. (Kuwaiti police later determined that the "hashish" was of dubious quality and had no resale value.) Al-Assadi testified that he had met with Mohammed Jawad, an Iraqi intelligence agent, in his coffee shop, and had been provided with ten sticks of explosives and a bag of weapons and detonators. The bombs, Jawad told him, were to be used against targets of opportunity in Kuwait City—automobile showrooms, marketplaces, and the like—in an attempt to disrupt the Bush visit and embarrass the Kuwaiti government. Al-Assadi further testified that Jawad had offered him an American-made four-wheel-drive Jeep for the mission, but that he rejected it as substandard. Instead, he drove his own car, an eight-passenger van, into Kuwait. The van turned out to have been stolen from Kuwait City during the Iraqi occupation, and had Kuwaiti tags.

Al-Assadi and al-Ghazali were the only defendants to plead guilty in connection with the alleged plot; the two men were named in a six-hundred-page indictment, along with twelve others, that accused them of car theft and of working with the Iraqi regime, entering Kuwait illegally, transporting weapons and alcohol, and plotting to kill former President Bush. The other defendants in the case have consistently denied any knowledge of or connection with the alleged plot.

There remains a serious conflict between the testimony of the Kuwaiti—and American—government's two star witnesses. Al-Ghazali claimed, in his confession, that al-Assadi knew everything there was to know at the outset; before taking off for Kuwait, the two men had met in a parking lot in Basra to talk over the plan to murder George Bush. But al-Assadi, in his testimony, insisted that no such information had been shared with him. He knew nothing of any plan to assassinate Bush. "I am a smuggler," he said.

The account gets much murkier at this point: there is no evidence that any of the alleged assassins took any overt steps to deploy any bombs. Sometime before dawn on April 13th, al-Ghazali and al-Assadi, accompanied by two Iraqi accomplices and six paying passengers, took off for Kuwait in al-Assadi's van and in al-Ghazali's Toyota Land Cruiser, which was then allegedly carrying the Iraqi-made car bomb. They crossed the border near Salmi, where Kuwait, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia meet. The tristate-border area is the site of a flourishing black market. Al-Assadi claimed that once he was across the border he buried some of the bombs in the sand and threw away the bag of detonators and weapons.

At some point, al-Assadi and al-Ghazali decided to leave their paying passengers, who included al-Assadi's uncle and a cousin by marriage, and parked the van in the desert. The uncle refused to stay behind and came along with al-Assadi and al-Ghazali and the accomplices as they drove off in the Land Cruiser to look for sleeping accommodations. They made their way to the sheep farm of Bader al-Shimmari, a known smuggler, with a police record, and hid the whiskey, some weapons, and their vehicle in a sheep pen. Other members of the al-Shimmari family showed up, along with the passengers left in the van, and two days and nights of smoking, drinking, womanizing, driving around, and telephoning ensued. (Everyone in Kuwait has a car telephone, it appears.) According to al-Ghazali's account, he spent one of those nights in the apartment of a friend in Kuwait City, twenty miles to the east, watched a television report about Bush's planned visit to Kuwait University, and asked to be taken there. No one offered to take him, and Bush never went to the main campus of the university anyway. That act—asking for help in casing the joint—was as close as anyone came to an overt act aimed at assassinating Bush. There was also no attempt to plant a bomb in an auto showroom, a marketplace, or anywhere else in Kuwait during the Bush visit. Al-Ghazali testified that he did not even know the location of Kuwait University—allegedly the main target of opportunity in the Bush assassination plot. Al-Assadi, he told the court, "was supposed to show me how to get there."

The al-Shimmari farm—long suspected of being a depot for smugglers and their goods—was under round-the-clock surveillance by the Kuwaiti police. The police waited less than a day before seizing the two vehicles parked there—one of which, they would later learn, contained the car bomb. At some point, according to the testimony of al-Ghazali, he got rid of his suicide belt in the desert. Al-Ghazali, al-Assadi, and at least two other Iraqis, unable to get to their cars and whiskey in the surrounded sheep pen, stole a white Mercedes, apparently thinking that it would eventually get them back to Basra. They filled the car's tank with the wrong fuel, and it broke down, forcing the men to begin walking toward the Iraqi border. They were spotted by Kuwaiti citizens—walking in the desert is highly unusual—and the police were notified. The police did nothing. More citizens made calls, and the police finally began tracking the Iraqis, who were seized without a struggle on April 15th. Eleven others, including five members of the al-Shimmari family, had been arrested a day earlier. The Kuwaiti government—to the acute embarrassment of police officials—later handed out cash awards to those citizens who reported the intruders.

Complicating the basic confusion of the various stories, in which defendant contradicted defendant, was a claim by the Kuwaiti government that it had known of the assassination attempt for more than a month. That claim was made on the second day of the trial, by Police Colonel Abdul Samad al-Shatti. He told the court that the police had learned in mid-March, from "a secret source inside Iraq," that some Iraqi "terrorists" were plotting to infiltrate Kuwait and plant bombs. No evidence to support that claim has been made public, and no warnings were given by Kuwait at the time either to George Bush or to the Clinton Administration. Furthermore, a former high-ranking Kuwaiti military officer assured me during an interview in Kuwait that there had been no significant penetration of Iraqi intelligence before the Bush visit. Colonel al-Shatti's testimony, the Kuwaiti officer explained, had been concocted out of embarrassment, after public criticism of the inept performance of the police in arresting the alleged plotters.

The C.I.A., in the Counter Terrorism Center report obtained by the Boston *Globe*, noted that its investigators had been informed by Kuwaiti security officials of the infiltration of a smuggling ring—clearly tied to the al-Shimmari family—that had been transporting weapons and other goods from Iraq to Kuwait early in the year. C.I.A. analysts, in attempting to explain the origins of the alleged assassination plot, theorized that the Kuwaiti government "may have then decided to claim this [smuggling] operation was directed against Bush."

ONE American counterintelligence official, on being asked about the abject performance of the alleged assassination team, conceded, "I don't think their heart was in what they were doing. So it might not have been the crack front-line Republican Guard"—Iraq's best-trained military force—"but their mission was to try and get a car bomb as close as possible to kill Bush. They weren't highly motivated, and they weren't real careful, and I think they performed their duty like the White House staff performs its."

Other officials, including members of the White House staff and the Justice Department's Mark Richard, have repeatedly pointed out that Wali al-Ghazali, in private interviews with the F.B.I., continued to maintain that he was recruited by Iraqi intelligence and sent into Kuwait to kill George Bush. They have further asserted that C.I.A. analysts have been able to verify al-Ghazali's descriptions of Iraqi intelligence facilities in Basra, and have apparently corroborated his identification of some known Iraqi intelligence personnel. But these officials have also acknowledged that, since al-Ghazali is facing a death sentence, he could obviously testify—as one intelligence official put it—"to being the Pope." And they concede that the Kuwaiti officials have been unable to recover the suicide belt that al-Ghazali claimed he discarded in the desert. The bombs, detonators, and weapons allegedly thrown away by al-Assadi have not been found, either.

"Yes, some elements are extremely amateurish," Mark Richard says. "But others are not." He argues that Iraqi intelligence had "nothing to lose" by using the al-Ghazali group. "It's a win-win situation. What are these guys going to give up"—if they're captured. "The operations of the Iraqi intelligence service in Basra? They don't know it." Anyway, Richard says, the operation was obviously set up to kill al-Ghazali and the other members of the assassination team who carried out their orders and detonated the bomb.

In interviews over the summer, many past and present American intelligence officials expressed little surprise that the Clinton Administration had predicated the bombing of Baghdad on such conflicting and dubious evidence. One C.I.A. analyst explained, "Of course nobody wants to say, 'There's nothing to it, Mr. President,' especially when other guys are pushing it. The President asks the intelligence analysts for the bottom line: Is this for real or not? You can't really lose by saying yes." That hard-line attitude—"hanging tough" in a crisis—has marked many of America's intelligence failures since the beginning of the Cold War.

Thus, on a Saturday in June, the President and his advisers could not resist proving their toughness in the international arena. If they had truly had full confidence in what they were telling the press and the public about Saddam Hussein's involvement in a plot to kill George Bush, they would almost certainly have ordered a far fiercer response than they did. As it was, confronted with evidence too weak to be conclusive but, in their view, perhaps not weak enough to be dismissed, they chose to fire missiles at night at an intelligence center in the middle of a large and populous city.

"What you're trying to do is go after the people responsible," Secretary of Defense Les Aspin told reporters at a Pentagon briefing after the bombing. There was no chance that Saddam Hussein would be inside the intelligence complex at the time of the attack, he said, "but it's like any intelligence building." He went on, "You've got people who are there twenty-four hours watching communications. You presumably might have some people in there who are involved in maintenance, and cleanup crews of one kind or another. I wouldn't want to guess a number."

Anthony Lake, in his briefing that night, explained, in language eerily reminiscent of the Vietnam War, that the bombing of Baghdad "is an action, I hope, that will potentially save many Muslim as well as non-Muslim lives, both in the Middle East and elsewhere." It is no longer quite permissible to speak of destroying villages in order to save them, but maintenance men and cleanup crews had better beware. ♦

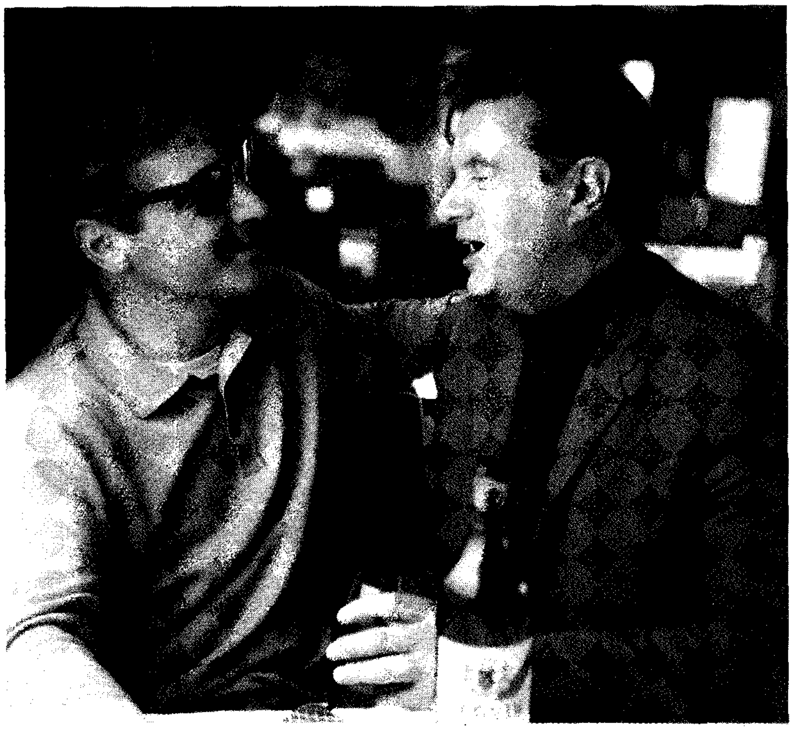
THE ART WORLD

BACON'S INSTINCT

The late Francis Bacon, called the greatest British painter since Turner, denied that the monsters and mutilations of his canvases were a lament on the human predicament and claimed that we are nothing but meat. But Bacon did put his passion in his work, as the author finds in retracing his friendship with the artist.

BY DAVID PLANTE

WHEN the painter Francis Bacon died, last year, I recalled his having said, in a conversation of some ten years before, that he was frightened of death, very frightened. This had struck me, because he had so often stated that death was simply the starkest fact of life, a fact that reduced us all to meat, and had stated it with a hardness that made me think he would find any emotional response to death, such as fear, meaninglessly personal and sentimental. Bacon's most common reaction to saying, as he often did, that he would die soon was a shrug and a dry laugh. Perhaps he had been trying to shrug and laugh off what was too personal for him to admit, or even to bear.



Bacon (right) with his lover George Dyer in 1965. When Dyer died, Bacon insisted that he had committed suicide and that this was the great tragedy of his life.

COURTESY OF MARLBOROUGH GALLERY, LONDON

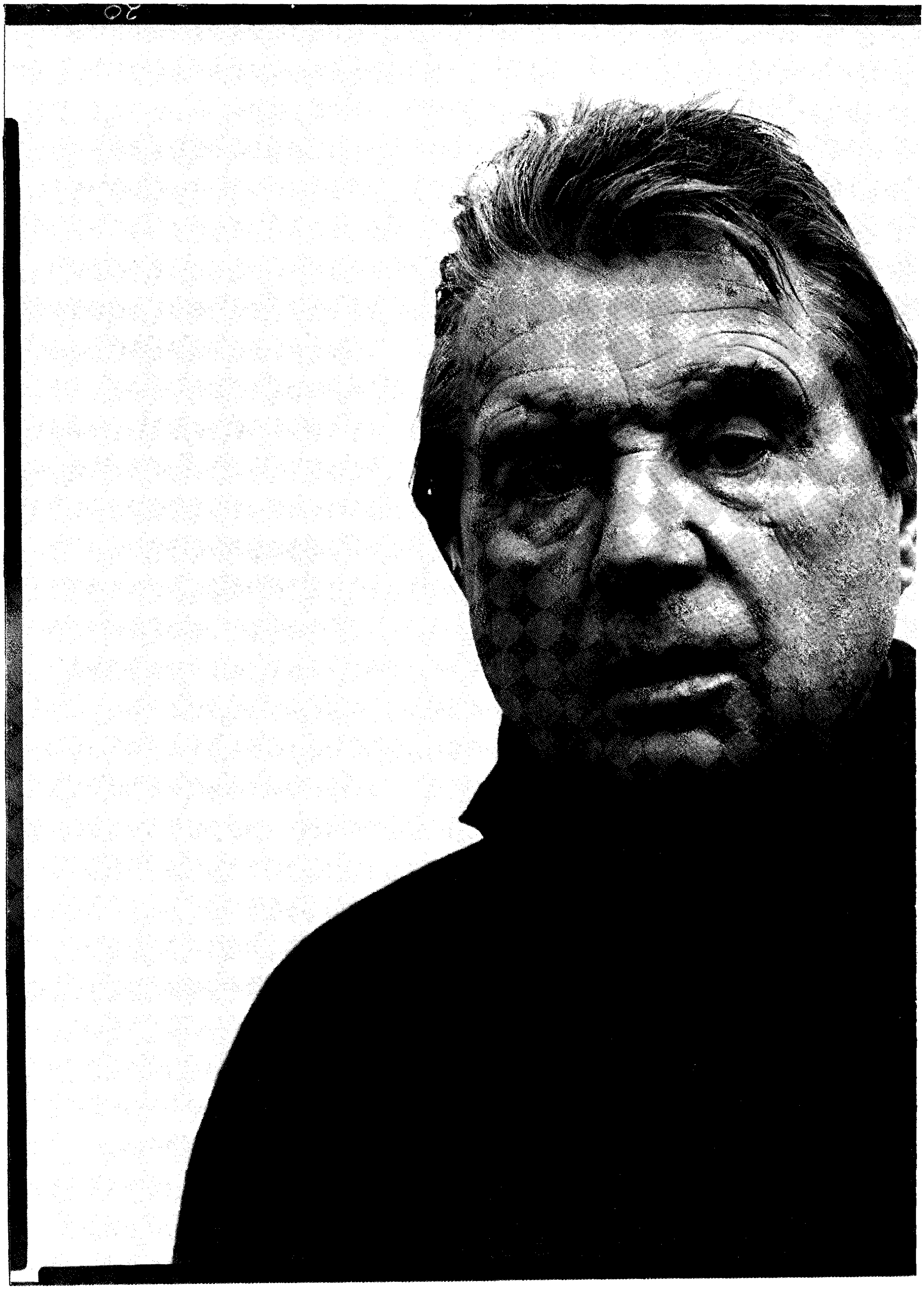
In London, I heard of his death over the radio, BBC World Service. This unexpected news startled me, and, his sudden death all at once shifting my perceptions of him, I was left feeling confused about his painting and his life. To try to sort out my confusion, I looked at reproductions of his paintings in catalogues of his great shows in Europe and America. It occurred to me for the first time that in the same way he had denied, over and over, that death had any personal meaning to him he had denied that there was in his paintings the meaning that made him one of the most highly acclaimed living artists in the world, and he had denied this meaning in favor of what he called, over and over, the brutality of fact.

What he most strongly denied, in conversations, in interviews, and, I think, even to himself, was that his paintings portrayed the horrors of the postwar world. He denied, that is, the validity of what most people went to his paintings for: to see, in the screaming popes, the violently mauled bodies, the figures isolated in vast spaces, images of the age in which they lived. To portray the horror of the world was to him to be illustrational, and he insisted his work was not illustrational.

Perhaps he denied the illustrational element in his work repeatedly because he was so often criticized for it, especially by Americans. Reactions to his last major retrospective in America—at the Hirshhorn, in 1989, and then at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, in 1990—were mixed. As the art historian Linda Nochlin has said to me, there were as many who found the work "too confessional, too narrative" as there were those who, like her, were impressed by it.

Again and again, in the now classic interviews done by his friend and illuminator the art critic David Sylvester, published by Thames and Hudson in several editions, from 1975 to 1993, Bacon denied anything illustrational in his work. When, in a passage of the interviews often cited by Bacon's critics, David Sylvester asked Bacon why he put a red band with a swastika on the arm of a violently mutilated figure in his 1965 triptych "Crucifixion," Bacon replied that he merely wanted to break the continuity of the arm and add the color red for formal reasons—an insistence on form over content which is surely among the most disingenuous such claims ever made.

He wanted, instead of the illustrational, the brutal fact. What was that? Whatever it was, it was something close to what Picasso had done. Bacon didn't like the work of any living painter (including himself) except Picasso. Contrasting Picasso with Matisse, he said to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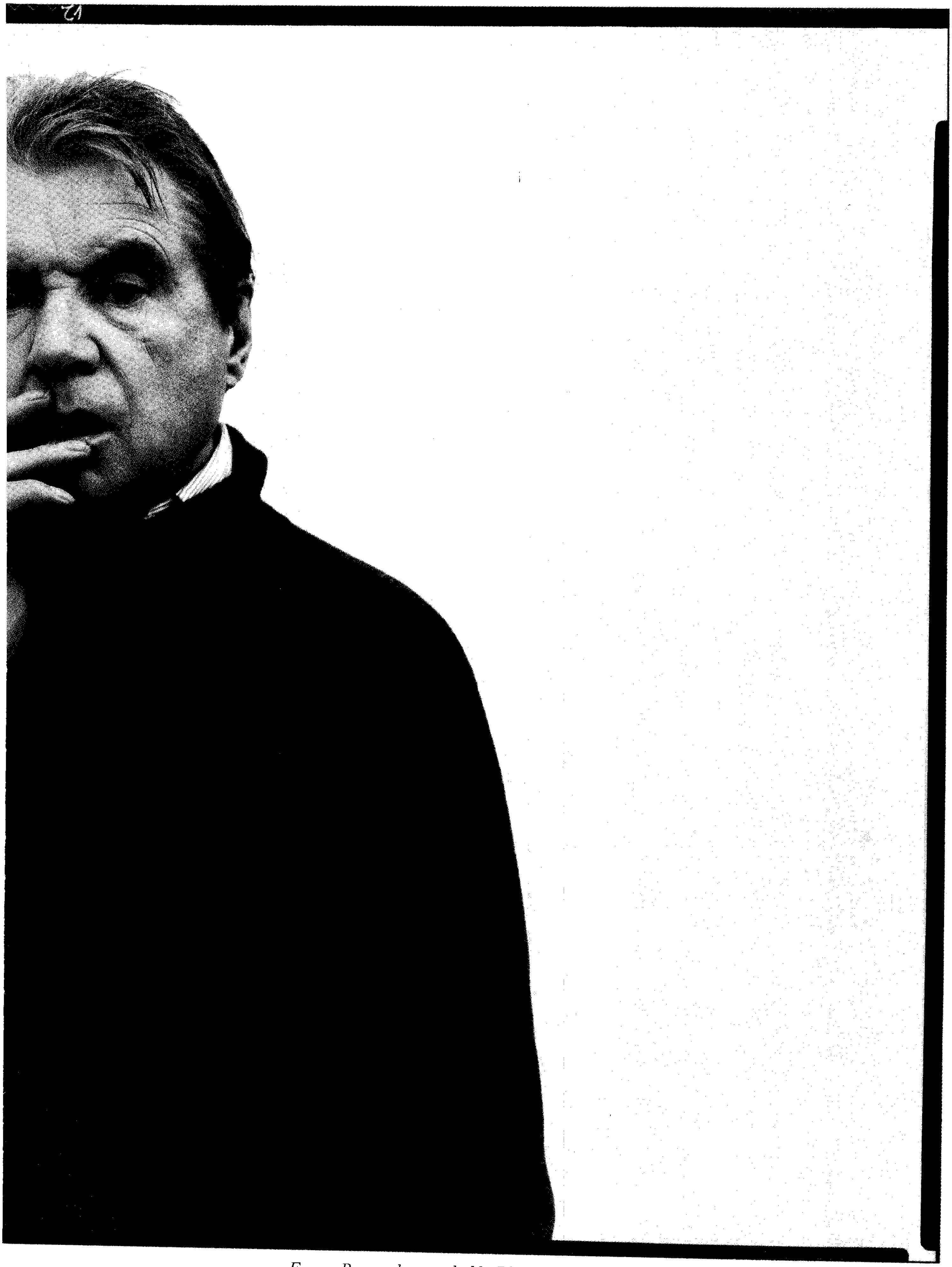


Francis Bacon, photographed by Richard Avedon in Paris, April 11, 1979.

Sylvester, "There is very little realism in Matisse. I think it's the reason I have always been so much more interested in Picasso. Because Matisse never had the—what can one say?—the brutality of fact which Picasso had."

Looking at Bacon's paintings after his death and seeing in them the contradiction I'd been only half aware of when he was alive, I realized that in the twenty-five years I knew him, I had always seen him as if he were standing before one of his paintings. From the time I was first introduced to him, I saw him primarily as a famous artist, so there was, I began to understand after he died, something illustrational in my view of him. I saw in him the same impulse toward the brutality of fact that I saw in his work—a brutality of fact that was for Bacon very different from what it was for Picasso. For Bacon, the fact at its most brutal was that we are nothing but meat, and he repeated this often. It was as if he were trying to make this belief into an everyday matter; and, when angry, he could intimidate one into agreeing with him. But, angry as he might become in the profession of this belief, his anger was roused not only by what he saw as one's stupidity at not accepting the obvious but, I think, by Bacon's frustration at being reduced to insisting so passionately on the obvious: *Of course we're nothing but meat.* It is a wonder the obviousness didn't flatten him out totally. At times, it almost did. But it didn't. He had the moral strength—inspired, perhaps, by his horror of the obviousness of what he saw as the human condition—to work on it and make something of it, as if this most blatant obviousness that we are utterly meaningless were his canvas.

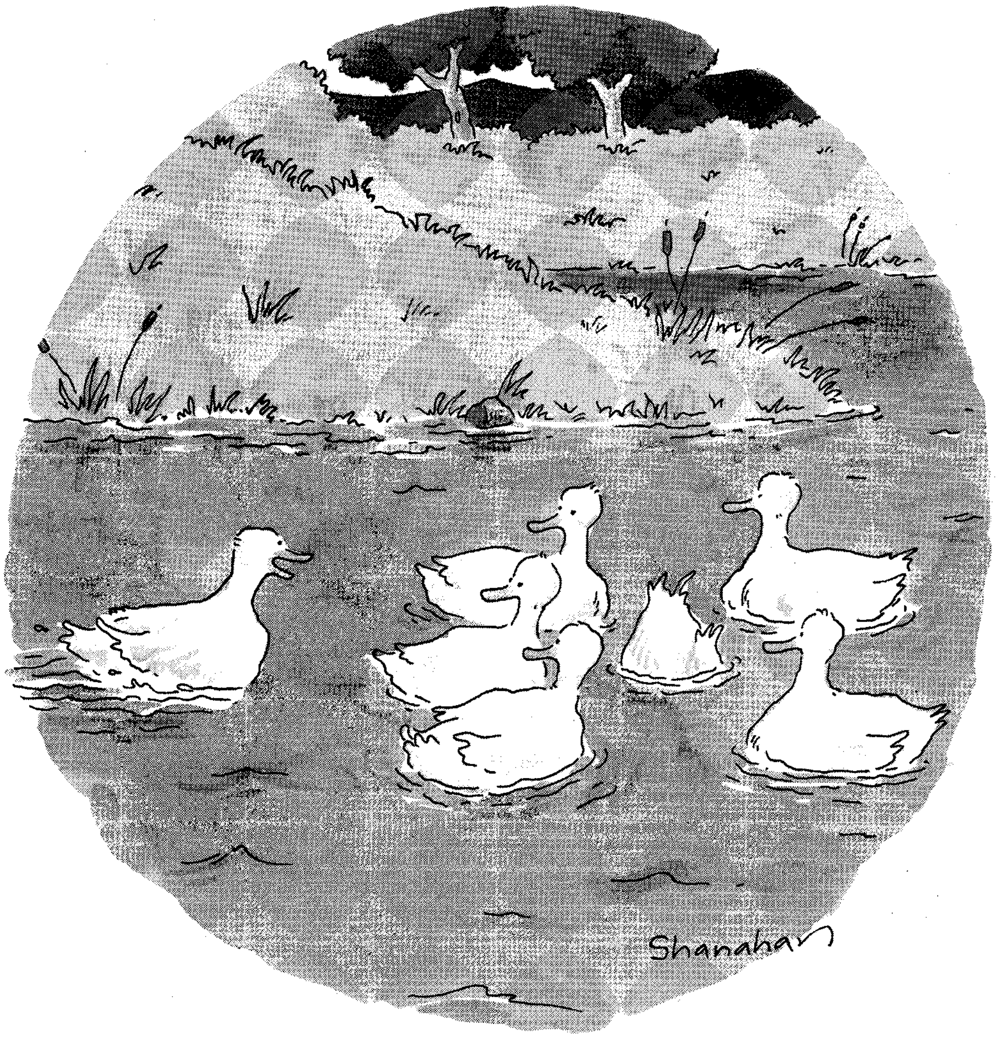
In the year since his death, the more I have seen Bacon's paintings as a personal struggle the less illustrational they have become. In a recently published biography of Bacon, there is a sentence that gets right to the center of the issue of illustration in his work. The biography is "The Gilded Gutter Life of Francis Bacon," by the British writer Daniel Farson; it was published by Century in England earlier this year, and will be published in the United States in March by Pantheon. Though the sentence is not elaborated upon, it says a lot: "Francis told me how much he disliked the 'willed brutalism' of Kiefer"—meaning the German artist Anselm Kiefer. This implies that brutalism, to be genuine, must not be willed. The problem of Bacon's work is all in his wanting to convey the brutality of fact without the conveyance appearing to be willed.

Bacon said to Sylvester: "You see, you don't know how the hopelessness in one's working will make one just take paint and just do almost anything to get out of the formula of making a kind of illustrative image—I mean, I just wipe it all over with a rag or use a brush or rub it with something or anything or throw turpentine and paint and everything else onto the thing to try to break the willed articulation of the image, so that the image will grow, as it were, spontaneously and within its own structure, and not my structure. Afterwards, your sense of what you want comes into play, so that you begin to work on the hazard that has been left to you on the canvas. And out of all that, possibly, a more organic image arises than if it was a willed image."

Perhaps Bacon's success was that he *could* will something into being in his paintings that went deeper than will, to convey brutality. Perhaps his genius as a painter lies in his power to will his work to be will-less.

Trying to get my perspective on Bacon clear after his death, I talked to or wrote letters to friends who knew him to ask them what they thought. The artist R. B. Kitaj wrote back:

> Balthus and Bacon have been my two favorite postwar painters. We all have bees in our bonnet and one of Bacon's most boring phobias was this business about illustration.... God knows I've got my own obsessions but I always found Bacon amazingly bland and formalist and orthodox on this question of illustration. The great Immoralist himself, perhaps the apotheosis of unor-



"Let me through! I'm a quack."

> thodox, nihilist surrealism in painting—I never expected to be bored by him. . . . One expected to be maligned by him (as all London painters who knew him well attest), but not bored. Sickert (to whom Bacon owed a few debts) said that all art was illustration and only illustration. And I like that saying because it's funny and original and because it's sort of true. Even a splash of paint illustrates something about the painter-splasher, something about his mind and spirit, and is a little less accidental than Bacon pretended. . . . A painting *is* an autonomous thing and it sure as hell isn't, any more than a person is unencumbered. No man is an island and neither is a/his painting, so, of course you're right, David, about Bacon's swastika armband, etc. . . .
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> For me, Bacon was not a great painter like Matisse or Picasso. His was a narrower talent, and he seems to have refused to draw, but from my perspective he was the best, most original and engaging painter around by the time he died. . . . I cherish *unusual* paintings and, boy oh boy, are they rare and hard to achieve! Bacon kept doing them . . . Of course it's all a matter of taste, so I don't wish to argue Bacon with those who are turned off by him, including brilliant friends of mine. . . . But I do think he sang the song of himself. His pictures are every bit as elegant as the high American abstraction, but he engaged his urbane nihilism to one's own neurotic unease and achieved a psychological bloody pitch which almost always held my attention.

"Yes, we are going through the same things in life, but you're going through them at ninety-five thousand dollars a year, and I'm going through them at thirty-two thousand."

• •

A little later, at a dinner party in London, I heard David Sylvester say, borrowing a notion from Jasper Johns, that he wondered if Yeats, great a poet as he was, failed to be among the greatest because he lacked "helplessness." The Greek poet Nikos Stangos, who was present, suggested that Yeats *was* limited because he was, however subtle, rhetorical—his poetry was constrained by its complicated intentions. It occurred to me that the same might be said of the work of Francis Bacon, but with an essential difference: he himself, aware of the constraint of illustration and wanting to eschew it, tried, with even more than will, with driving passion, to go beyond it and give his work helplessness.

And therefore, on the personal level, his gambling. And therefore his being drawn to helplessly alcoholic people, especially women, such as his friend and model Isabel Rawsthorne, the widow of the composers Constant Lambert and Alan Rawsthorne; and his friend Sonia Orwell, the widow of George Orwell.

And therefore, since he was impelled to what was most helpless, his being drawn most of all to tragedy. There was a need in Bacon for what he called "real tragedy." Tragedy, as vast as the vastest night falling, occurs beyond one's controlling it and makes one entirely helpless. Tragedy would give the greatest authenticity to his work. Although he denied that he had any intention of trying to create a tragic art, the obviousness of his intention belies his denial. He sometimes, when drunk, shouted out that he wanted "real tragedy," and sometimes he even seemed to be trying to will tragedy on himself.

Another friend of Bacon's I talked to about him was the British poet Stephen Spender, who had known Bacon well, and who had also been thinking a lot about him since his death. He said he thought Bacon imagined tragedy to be sensation, the greatest possible sensation. And tragedy's fulfillment is death. Bacon insisted that his lover, George Dyer, had committed suicide, and he insisted on this as the great tragedy of his life, but it is not at all certain that George Dyer did commit suicide. However many brandies and sleeping pills he took before his death, he most likely died in the way hopeless alcoholics and drug addicts do, ultimately. When Dyer demanded to go to the great 1971 exhibition of Bacon's work at the Grand Palais, in Paris, Bacon, concerned, assigned a guardian to him to mind him, but Dyer found himself alone, wandering from bar to bar all day, drinking brandies and taking pills, and in his hotel room took just enough more in alcohol and sleeping pills to die. With the exhibition and the ceremonies set up, Bacon attended, and "not for an instant did he let on that this was not the happiest day of his life"—so John Russell wrote in the added chapter of the 1993 edition of his 1971 monograph, "Francis Bacon."

To see an artist's work in personal terms must surely be one of the objects of a biography of the artist, and Daniel

Farson's is only the first of many biographies of Bacon that have already appeared or will appear soon. Though David Sylvester is preparing what will be, essentially, a book of criticism, it will include important personal accounts of Bacon in relation to his work. Andrew Sinclair's "Francis Bacon, His Life and Violent Times" has been published by Sinclair-Stevenson in England and will be published by Crown this fall in the United States. Michael Peppiatt, who wrote an extensive entry in the catalogue of a Bacon retrospective earlier this year in Lugano, Switzerland, is also working on a biography, as is the British novelist Paul Bailey. And it was recently announced that Bacon's friend and model Henrietta Moraes is writing a memoir in part about him. In England, newspaper articles seem to appear every week announcing yet another biography.

Bacon talked so openly about himself that anyone who knew him could put together a version of his life as an artist simply by remembering what he said. Though the two are not separate entities, I'll leave his private life for later—for Bacon to reveal, himself, in conversations that I was part of over many years and that I recorded in my journals—and stick for now to his artistic development, and the luck, as he called it, that made him a painter.

SNAKE

When it seemed to me that whatever it was that was holding
me there pretending to let me go but then bringing
me back each time as though I had never been gone
and knowing me knowing me unseen among those rocks
when it seemed to me that whatever that might be
had not changed for all my absence and still was not changing
once in the middle of the day late in that time
I stood up from the writings unfinished on the table
in the echoless stone room looking over the valley
I opened the door and on the stone doorsill
where every so often through the years I had come
upon a snake lying out in the sunlight I found
the empty skin like smoke on the stone with the day
still moving in it and when I touched it and lifted
all of it the whole thing seemed lighter than a single
breath and then I was gone and that time had changed and when
I came again many years had passed and I saw
one day along the doorsill outside that same room
a green snake lying in the sunlight watching me
even from the eyes the skin loosens leaving the colors
that have passed through it and the colors shine after it has gone

—W. S. Merwin

He had to be lucky to become a painter, because he had no formal schooling to be one, and therefore had to make his way without the support system usually available to students at an art school. Because he was a weak boy suffering from asthma (which finally killed him), and because his parents continually moved their family back and forth between England and Ireland, he had almost no formal schooling at all. He never got on with his father, a horse trainer, or his mother, who had inherited some money from her industrial family, and he left home at sixteen.

What decided him to be a painter was seeing, as a teen-ager in Paris in 1927, an exhibition of Picasso's works at Galerie Paul Rosenberg. He started doing drawings and watercolors, and lived in Paris for over a year, earning money partly as an interior decorator and furniture designer. When he moved to London to live, he set up a studio in which he exhibited his furniture, rugs, and watercolors. Presently, he met the Australian painter Roy de Maistre, fifteen years older and a Catholic convert, one of whose paintings was what Farson calls a "sado-masochistic" Crucifixion (it is now owned by the Leicestershire Museum, in England), and de Maistre became Bacon's lover and mentor. Bacon started his first oil paintings. In 1930, he and de Maistre held an exhibition of their own works in Bacon's studio, a converted garage in South Kensington, and they were then asked by a new dealer, Freddie Mayor, to exhibit in a group show in his gallery. In 1933, the influential art critic Herbert Read reproduced Bacon's own "Crucifixion" (beside a Picasso "Bather") in his book "Art Now," and the painting was bought by a well-known collector of contemporary art, Sir Michael Sadler. Bacon and de Maistre also appeared in a second group show at the Mayor Gallery—one that included paintings by Picasso, Masson, Ernst, Arp, and Klee, and carvings by Henry Moore.

After what seemed a promising start, Bacon held in 1934 an exhibition of his own work in the basement of a friend's house, which he called the Transition Gallery, but this was not a success, and Bacon destroyed most of his work. Though he and de Maistre remained friends, they grew apart. Bacon went through a period of doing little work, of gambling, petty theft, and living off other people. One of the people who supported him financially was an Englishman, Eric Hall. Rich and interested in his work, Eric Hall had as early as 1929 bought a rug from Bacon and had been following his career since then. In 1937, he invited Bacon to exhibit in a show of young British artists that he'd organized at Thomas Agnew and Sons, a London gallery. That show included several of Bacon's paintings, along with works by de Maistre, Graham Sutherland, Victor Pasmore, Robert Medley, Ivon Hitchens, Ceri Richards, Julian Trevelyan, and John Piper—a whole generation of British artists.

Eric Hall became Bacon's lover, and he bought Bacon's first great work, "Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion," completed in 1944 and shown at the Lefevre Gallery, in London, just a month before the end of the war in Europe. Bacon was thirty-five. The painting shocked: a triptych of three monstrous gray figures with long necks, the right-hand one without eyes but with a large mouth wide open and with its one peg leg stuck into what looks like a bed of nails; the middle one, apparently perched on the broken tripod base of a pedestal table, with a white rag hanging over a gaping mouth; the left-hand one, with tiny, flipper-like arms, wrapped, it appears, in a trailing blanket and positioned on a metal frame—all three occupying violently orange space. Eric Hall gave the painting to the Tate Gallery, in London. By 1948, Bacon's standing was high enough for Alfred Barr to buy a work, "Painting 1946," for the Museum of Modern Art, in New York. In 1954, Bacon with Lucian Freud and Ben Nicholson represented Great Britain at the Venice Biennale. One-man exhibitions in Paris, Turin, Milan, and Rome followed over the next four years, and in 1958 he signed a contract with Marlborough Fine Art, London. In 1962, the Tate Gallery put on his first major retrospective, and almost every year after that there was an important exhibition in a world cultural capital. Bacon was considered one of the greatest postwar painters—equal to, if very different from, Balthus, Dubuffet, Giacometti, and (though some American critics would dispute the claim) de Kooning and Newman.

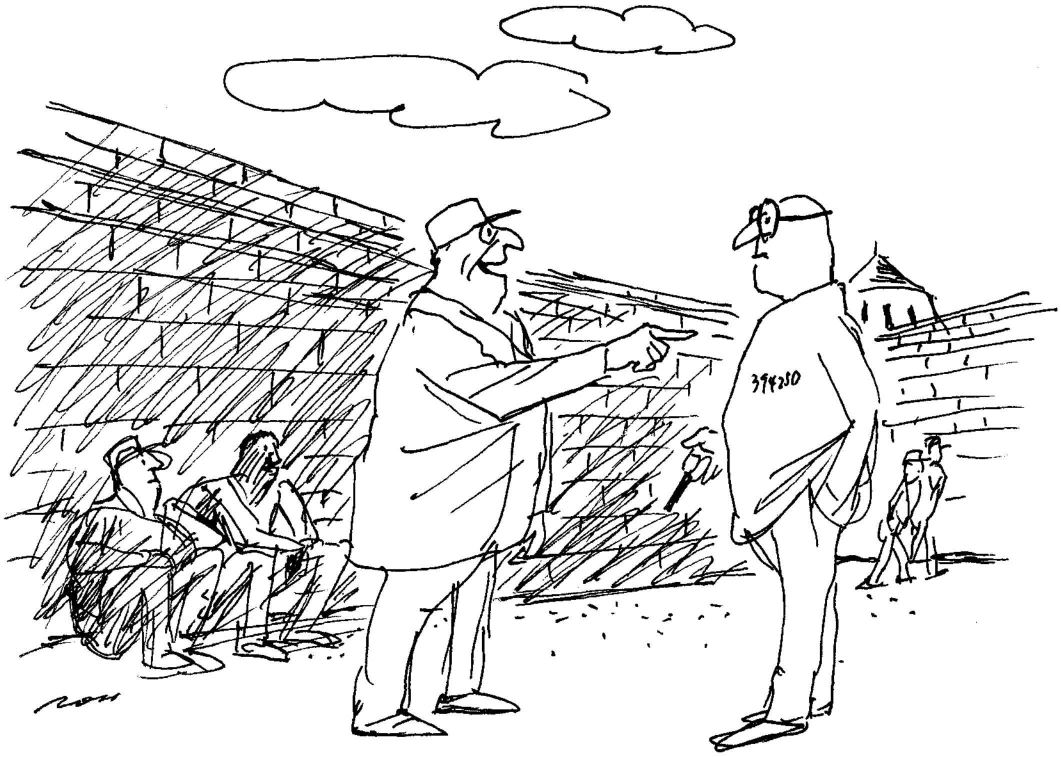
In light of Bacon's stature as an artist, it is not surprising that there are so many biographies being written about him, or that Farson's "The Gilded Gutter Life of Francis Bacon" made the London *Sunday Times* best-seller list. Written from a personal point of view—Farson was a friend of Bacon's for forty years—the book is not altogether accurate about the facts of Bacon's life, and some of those inaccuracies can, I suppose, lead to a misreading of Bacon as a person, if not as an artist. But, finally, mistakes about Bacon in this biography do not seem to matter, nor does the workmanlike, journalistic writing, if the object of the book is to be a lively homage to the artist, for it *is* that—a homage, made convincing by the consistency with which Farson tries to see Bacon honestly and in the round.

On the other hand, Andrew Sinclair's "Francis Bacon: His Life and Violent Times" has nothing of the character of Bacon in it. Sinclair, who met Bacon but did not know him, was not writing a memoir, as Farson was in part, but a biography based on disinterested research, and as it is evident that few of the people closest to Bacon spoke to him, his information must have been gathered largely from secondary sources. The accounts of the Boer War, in which Bacon's father participated as a captain; of life in Berlin in the twenties, when Bacon was there for a while; of London during the Second World War, when Bacon worked in the Civil Defence rescue service—all these harden about the center and do not allow any real life in. Attempts to give a sense of the artist's personal life lead Sinclair to such uninspired passages as this description of Bacon's reaction to the death of Dyer: "Although Bacon lived on for twenty years, the wound from this self-murder never healed. It bled inside him; it could not be staunched."

It is a very strange experience to read a biography—good or bad or in between—of someone you've known. It makes you wonder if you really had a friendship, and, if so, what it consisted of. My personal reaction to the Farson and Sinclair books was a renewal of the confusion about Francis Bacon which I felt upon his death. I spoke again to Stephen Spender about this confusion. It was, in fact, Spender who, in the autumn of 1966, when we were travelling together by train from London to Paris, had introduced me to Bacon and Dyer, sitting right across the aisle from us. And in speaking to Spender I found that whatever critical thinking about Bacon's work had preoccupied me gave way to thoughts about him as a friend and what I remembered of him as a friend.

I MET Stephen Spender in London, where I had gone, from Boston, to live. He asked me, a few months after I arrived, if I'd go to the South of France with him to help plant trees in the garden of his and his wife Natasha's house there. We had precise instructions from Natasha about where and how the row of cypresses should be planted. Stephen thought we could spend a couple of days in Paris on the way. On the train, we ran into Francis and George, who were going to Paris for the opening of a show of Francis's paintings at the Galerie Maeght, and Francis invited us to the show.

At the opening, standing about Bacon were George Dyer, Isabel Rawsthorne—who, laughing a wide, wet, red laugh, was tearing open congratulatory telegrams and reading them and then letting them drop to the floor—and Sonia Orwell, all of them



"I'm blue-collar myself, but, hey—I've got great respect for you white-collar people."

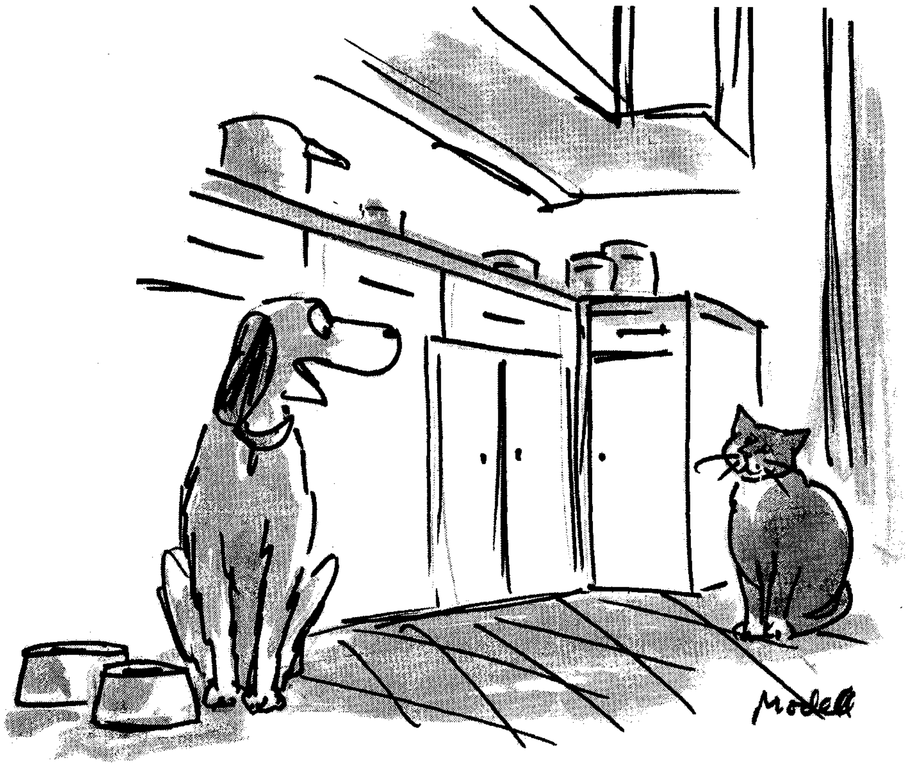
very drunk. Stephen and I joined them, excited, but we did not get drunk.

George took my hand and led me around the exhibition to tell me, in nasal Cockney, which pictures were of him, and to ask if I recognized him. One was of him, very mutilated, sitting on a toilet. He put his arm around me and was affectionate. He wore a suit, and a tie knotted so tightly that his sharp-edged collar cut into his neck, and his face and carefully combed-back hair seemed to form a wedge. He had a large, square jaw and a large nose and thin lips.

Stephen and I had lunch in a restaurant with Francis and George and Sonia the next day. As we were leaving the restaurant, Stephen suddenly asked Francis and George if they'd like to come to the South of France, too. Immediately, they said they would. On the way back to the hotel, Stephen said, "Francis and George are always fighting. Maybe it was a bad idea to invite them to the South of France."

He and I left the next day, after seeing the great Picasso show in the Grand Palais. In the Spenders' garden, I dug many holes, according to Natasha's plan, and planted the trees. And a day or two later Francis and George arrived. They did not stay with us in the Spender house but in a hotel in the village of Maussane. We met them there in the evening for dinner, in a wood-panelled dining room that was chilly, so the steam from the tureen of potage we had ordered rose up in a dense cloud when it was brought in. Francis talked about the Picasso show, which he had also seen. He said, "I can't admire the man enough." I said, "You couldn't have painted your pictures without him, could you?" He looked at me as if amazed, and pressed his lower lip against his upper so his chin wrinkled, and his eyes went a little out of focus, and it occurred to me that I had stated something so obvious that Francis's only possible reaction to it was amazement. Every other living artist he denigrated: Henry Moore's drawings were knitting, Graham Sutherland's portraits were no more than *Time*-magazine covers.

The next day, Stephen drove Francis and George and me to Aix-en-Provence, to see, in the museum, a small self-portrait thought, then, to be by Rembrandt, which Francis particularly liked, because of what he described as the almost self-conscious use of paint to create the features, so that the use of the paint was as important as what it was used to portray. During that conversation, I began trying to see Francis's paintings in what he said—it was, I thought, a little insight through him into his work. Then, on the way back to Maussane, we came upon the site of an accident in which a van had smashed into a tree, and all about the road, fallen from the van, were dead, bloody pigs. Francis asked Stephen to stop the car so he could look, and I imagined I had another insight to go with the first, for I saw the bloody pigs on the wide gray road in terms of thick paint.



"Why don't you go out and scratch a chair or something?"

At dinner that night, in the dining room of the hotel where Francis and George were staying, they both got very drunk. George simply looked around. Francis focussed with a frown on what Stephen and I were saying, as if waiting for a reason to be angry. As far as I knew, he and George hadn't fought while they were in Maussane. I can't recall who started talking about Christianity—perhaps it was Francis, when he said, repeatedly, that "Macbeth" showed that Shakespeare was not Christian. When Stephen said, "Well, I think I'm Christian, at least in believing we must help one another," it was as though he had become responsible for all the worst aspects of Christianity. Francis leaned in closer and asked, "What, practically, do you do to help others?" Stephen said he did very little—nothing, really—and he certainly wouldn't give everything he had to the poor, but he felt he should. Francis said, aggressively, that this was rubbish, rubbish, and he got very angry, more angry than the circumstances in any way justified, repeating again and again, "Rubbish." Stephen went silent, as I did, and I thought I saw behind Francis the depth of his hard darkness.

When we got back to St. Jerome, the Spender house, Stephen, sensing in my silence that I'd been upset by Francis, said, "You must consider the darkness of Francis just part of life, in the same way the Vietnam War and all forms of viciousness are just a part of life, and not the whole. There is a side to Francis which obviously makes him love to see trees and landscapes and have friendships, and, too, to love, as he loves George. You've seen this about him here in Provence."

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Back in London, I saw Sonia Orwell. She said Francis and George were fighting a lot. They'd been together since 1964, not a very long time. George didn't live with Francis—they couldn't possibly live together. George had a flat of his own, across the Thames, in Battersea.

Nikos Stangos and I were then living in Battersea, too, in a block of flats called Overstrand Mansions, where, Francis told us when he first came to dinner, some months after I'd seen him in France, he himself had lived some years before. He came back regularly after, and that is how I really began to know him. But he never brought George.

Then, in September, 1970, the newspapers were filled with the story that cannabis had been discovered in Francis's flat by the police. Francis, who declared he didn't smoke, because of the asthma that he'd suffered from all his life and that had kept him out of the military during the Second World War, accused George of planting it and alerting the police. There was a court case, in which the police had to admit that information about the presence of the drug had come from George. Francis was acquitted.

Shortly after, I was on a bus one afternoon crossing the Chelsea Bridge in the rain, and I saw, from an upper-deck window, George, out in the rain, walking along the pedestrian way of the bridge. The Thames was dark gray beyond him. His hands were in the pockets of a raincoat, but his head was bare, and water was running off it. That was the last time I saw him.

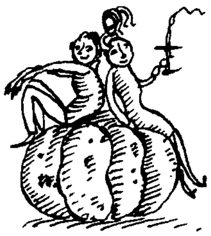
His death, in Paris, came in October of 1971, barely thirty-six hours before Francis's exhibition opened at the Grand Palais.

That December, Nikos and I were invited to a Boxing Day party in the evening. Sonia and Francis were there. Francis left early, but Sonia stayed on and got very drunk, so I thought I should take her home. In the taxi, she babbled, in a strident, accusing way, about how violently unhappy Francis was, with George dead only six weeks. "You don't understand—none of you understand—what desperation is. You won't help. You don't know how to help. I could kill, kill, kill, kill you all for your lack of sensitivity. Francis is suffering. Do any of you care? Do any of you ring him up? Fuck all if you do."

The next time I saw him, I mentioned George's death to Francis, and, laughing a little bit from the side of his mouth, he shrugged one shoulder.

•

Nikos had become poetry and art-book editor at Penguin Books in 1967, and as a consequence had got to know a lot of artists. Among them were young artists our age, such as Michael Craig-Martin and Jan Hashey. One Sunday at tea at Michael and Jan's, Michael showed us his latest work: little "stories," as he called them, written on file cards, one sentence to a card, and all the stories had to do with the different ways he saw himself and how he thought others saw him. The work was about self-consciousness. Michael said he worried a great deal about art, what art meant.



After tea, Nikos and I went to Sonia's. She had invited us to a birthday party for Francis. I sat next to Francis, and on his other side was David Sylvester. I asked Francis if he ever worried about art, in the way Michael did. "No," he said, and laughed. "I just paint. I paint out of instinct. That's all." "Then you're very lucky others like your work," David said. "That's it," Francis said. "I'm very lucky. People, for some reason, buy my work. If they didn't, I suppose I'd have to make my living in another way." I said, "I'm sure people buy or, if they can't buy it, are drawn to your work because you do paint out of instinct." "Perhaps it's just fashionable for them to be drawn now," Francis said. I said, "No, that's not true. And you know it isn't true." He said, "You're right. I do know. Of course I know. If I stop to wonder why I paint, I say I paint out of instinct."

David looked very thoughtful. He sat away from the table, his large body a little slumped forward, his hands on his knees. Slightly wall-eyed, he stared at the table as he thought, and he finally asked Francis, very slowly, "How does luck come into your work?"

Francis said, "If anything works for me in my paintings, I feel it is nothing I've made myself but something luck has given me."

David asked, "Is there any way of preparing for that luck before you start working?"

"It comes by chance," Francis said. "It wouldn't come by will power. But it's impossible to talk about this."

This excited me, and I immediately asked, "Because it's a mystery?"

Francis jerked around to me, his eyes wide. He said flatly, "I don't think one can explain it."

I knew that I was trying to push Francis into saying something that I wanted him to say but which I also knew he disdained, as he disdained all forms of mysticism.

Nikos said to me, "Do you know what you're saying?"

I took the risk and asked Francis, "Do you ever think that if one knew enough one might be able to explain the mystery? And if one could explain would the mystery go and the work be destroyed?"

Francis pursed his lips. He could sometimes appear to be parodying the expression of deep thought. He said, "Are you asking me if I ever think I could destroy my work by knowing too much about what makes it?"

"More than that: I wonder, have you ever wanted to explain what makes a painting work even though you knew the explanation would destroy it?"

Francis said, "I can't want that, because I know I never would be able to explain." He laughed.

•

Nikos and I continued to have dinner with Francis from time to time, in our small flat in Battersea or, more often, out in a restaurant, where he always paid the bill. At some of these dinners in restaurants were as many as ten or twelve people, and I met at them a few of Francis's closest friends, including Dickie Chopping and Denis Wirth-Miller, both artists. Francis was always as attentive to the waiters as to the people at the table, and whenever a waiter put another bottle of wine on the table Francis handed him a pound note. I once saw him put a pound note in a bread basket that was being passed around by the people at the table. Nikos and I would drive Francis home, to his studio flat in Reece Mews, in South Kensington, and wait for him to open his narrow door among the wide doors of the garages in the mews and climb his steep flight of stairs, often stumbling and falling to his knees as he went up.

And we saw him at parties. At one

party, after being introduced to Lee Penrose, the American photographer who turned from fashion to photographing the horrors of the concentration camps before giving up her career, he came to where Nikos and I were standing with Stephen and Natasha Spender and said, laughing dryly, "You mean, that's the Lee Miller whose photograph was taken by Man Ray? I would have thought *her* beauty would remain, but nothing of it has, has it?" We also laughed, too intimidated by Francis to stand up to him.

He had arrived drunk, and he was almost incomprehensible when he spoke. After Nikos had left our group, Francis said—in reference to what, I didn't know, but I wondered if he was thinking of George—"In every relationship there's always a cherished and a cherisher. Always a cherished and a cherisher." I said, "I wonder if that's true. In my case—or, rather, Nikos's and my case—I don't know." "Oh, yes," Francis said. "Oh, yes. And don't deny being cherished. Don't deny it. Take it. Let yourself be cherished. You're the cherished one. And don't deny yourself being cherished." Natasha said, "But you don't understand. David is the cherisher." Francis lurched away with a jerk of his whole body, as if someone had suddenly called him. Then he left us and staggered from person to person.

Natasha left Stephen and me to talk with others, and Francis staggered back to us. Stephen asked him if he was working on something new, and Francis, loosely nodding his head, said, "Yes. I'm doing paintings of two bodies locked together. Locked. Locked together." He lost his balance whenever he paused in his talk, but each time he regained it he repeated, "Locked together, two bodies." I said, "Then they'll be love paintings." He leaned toward me and almost fell onto me, his wine splashing from his glass. "Yes," he said, "yes." Then he stumbled backward, his head up, and there suddenly came to his face a look of such terror that I laughed. I then realized he was about to fall backward, but before I could reach out to grab him he regained his balance and turned toward the wall and went to stand with his back against it. He mistook a door for the wall, however, and when he leaned against the slightly open door it gave way. Again, he righted himself just as I rushed over to him to stop him from falling. He said, leaning against the solid wall, "I want real tragedy."

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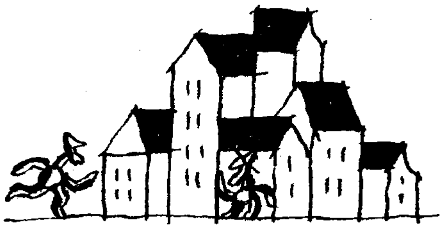
Francis would accept invitations to parties—drinks or dinner parties—and then appear or not. As Suzi Gablik, the American writer on contemporary art, said, expecting nothing from him was a condition of one's friendship with Francis. In the second half of the seventies, Suzi, living in London, gave a lot of parties and always invited Francis, and he almost always showed up. At one party, I found him standing by himself, and I went to speak with him. He was wearing tight gray trousers, a black turtleneck pullover, and another turtleneck pullover on top of this, but white. I imagined his body as having very thin legs and a round, bulging belly. The sleeves of both pullovers were pushed up, showing his powerful forearms and red hands.

I knew it was risky, but I tried to start a conversation by saying that the writer Jean Rhys had told me she had flashes of religion. "Does she, now?" Francis asked. Drunk myself, I asked him if he ever did. He laughed. "Never. Never never never never never never." I wanted to know what he was vulnerable to, and I asked him if he had any addiction. He didn't have any, he said. I said mine was sleep. "Sleep?" he said. "Really?" "How much do you sleep?" I asked. He said, "I get up every morning at seven o'clock." "I wish I could do that," I said. He asked me, "But don't you like consciousness, David? I love conscious life. I love being conscious." He slurred his words, but he didn't laugh.

Most people left the party, and Francis said to me, "Let's go to dinner—you, Nikos, Suzi, me, we'll go to dinner."

At the restaurant, Nikos said, reading the menu, "They have grilled gray mullet. That's what I'll have." Francis said, "That's what I'll have, too. Grilled gray mullet. I love that. I'm a simple person. Aren't I a simple person? Aren't I, Suzi?"



Suzi smiled and reached across the table and squeezed one of his hands. Nikos asked him, "What do you mean by simple?" He answered, "I'm direct and I'm obvious. I've had an appalling life. I've had a very unhappy life. I don't think about it. There it is. That's simple."

Suzi asked, "You've never been happy?"

"Once or twice," he said. "When I was young, in moments of ecstasy. Now I'm too old. I don't think about it, about happiness. There are many things I don't think about. I've done horrible things in my life, horrible. There they are. I don't think about them. I'm too old."

His dyed hair, with, it appeared, a hair cream to make it smooth and keep it starkly in place, was combed against his head, with some stiff strands carefully arranged down over his forehead. He said, "I've had a horrible life, a tragic life." He picked up a small pickle from a white plate and ate it, picked up another one, a large one, ate it, picked up another and put this in his mouth, and, as if the taste had only now occurred to him, he said, "These pickles are horribly sour." He didn't laugh, but everyone else did. He said, "I'm a very simple person who's had an appalling and tragic life."

Nikos asked, "What's been so appalling? You've never been seriously ill, you've never had to worry about money."

Francis said, "You're right. I was pretty when I was young. Old men liked me. One old man, an old Greek—I even remember his name—fell in love with me, gave me some money, and I used it to paint. I lived off old men. I always had a clear idea of what I wanted to do. I wanted to be exceptional. I wanted to do exceptional work. I just took money. I was an old whore. I still am. An older whore. A lucky old whore."

A strange sensation passed through me. I sat back, and tears came to my eyes.

The waiter put a gray mullet in front of Francis, and he asked, "What's this?" "Your grilled gray mullet," Nikos said. "I hate this," Francis said, "I can't eat it. I couldn't get a forkful down my throat."

Nikos asked Francis, "What makes your life tragic, then?"

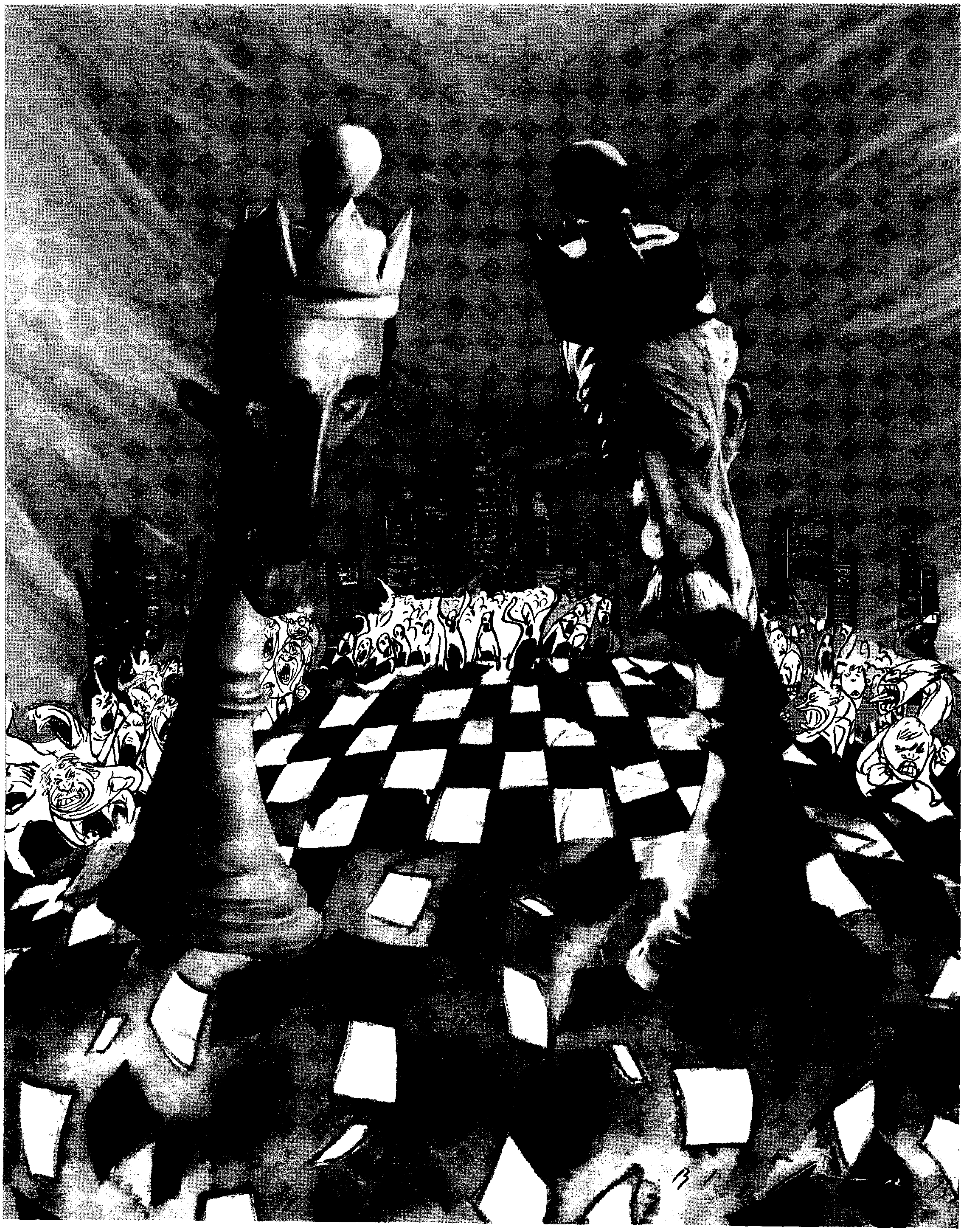
"I've been in love, and love is tragic."

"Love can make you happy," Nikos asserted.

Francis said, "I was in love with

ARTWARE • BY STEVE BRODNER

ENDGAME



someone who killed himself. That made our love tragic."

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For a while, Francis seemed not to drink at all. When, again at Suzi's—this time at a dinner party given by her for Sonia, Francis, Nikos, and me—Francis, who didn't say much all evening, kept putting his hand over his glass when Suzi was about to pour wine into it. He looked sad, I thought—that is, polite and attentive but making efforts to be so.

We talked about people becoming dependent on others, and Francis said, "George became dependent on me. If he hadn't, he'd probably be alive now. He was a thief, an inept thief, always getting caught, when I met him. He'd probably be in jail and alive now if he hadn't met me. But he did, he drank himself into a mad state and, because of me, killed himself."

Sonia said, aggressively, "He didn't kill himself. I read you the medical report, in English. He didn't kill himself."

"He did," Francis said. "He killed himself."

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Nikos became an editorial director at the publisher Thames and Hudson, and one of the first projects he worked on was the Bacon interview by David Sylvester. We saw a lot of Francis, and got to know something of Francis's world, the center of which was a drinking club, the Colony Room, which he called Muriel's, because it was run by Muriel Belcher, a close friend. Up a flight of old stairs, the walls painted dark green where the plaster hadn't fallen off, we went into a small room with a filthy gray carpet, dirty pale-green walls, empty bottles under the chairs, and on the floor a large tin tub filled with ice and green bottles. The first time we went there, a mirrored door at the other end of the room opened, and in came a man with loosely curled hair, spectacles, and a black-and-gold scarf about his neck. He was supporting an old woman in a lank gray dress. The man helped the woman to a stool at the end of the bar, near the entrance, and Francis introduced Nikos and me to her, Muriel, and the man, Ian Board. Muriel's hair was thin and pulled tight over her skull so her scalp showed. Her face was long, wrinkled, slack; her mouth was always open, and her teeth made me think of her skull. Her gums were bleeding, and she held a handkerchief to her mouth. She didn't look at us so much as tilt her head up and throw an approximate glance at us. Francis said, "Isn't she beautiful?" We said yes. He ordered champagne from the barman, whom he introduced us to. His name was also David. Then Francis introduced us to the pianist, a young, handsome man named Felicity; Francis ordered a brandy-and-soda for Felicity from David. Francis, Muriel, Ian, Nikos, and I talked about sex. Francis said, "I hate sex in the morning." "When do you like it?" I asked. He said, "Between three and four in the afternoon, with the sunlight blazing through the windows." I said, "I like it any time." Muriel tapped me across the cheek with the back of her twisted hand and said, "You old cunt." Ian said to me, "You should come in often, darling."

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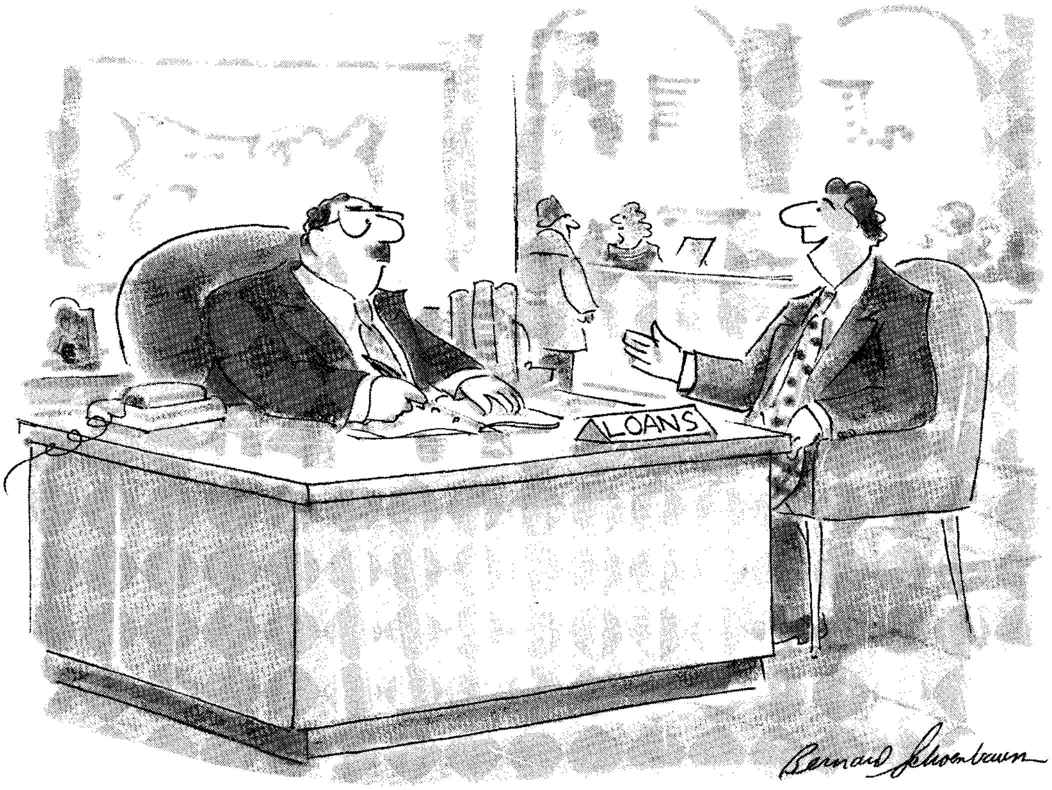
When we asked Francis to our flat for a meal, we also asked Stephen Spender. As if he had all the time in the world, Francis always arrived before Stephen. In the living room, I would ask him to sit, but he would say, "No, I'll stand. I like being uncomfortable."

One night, at our small, oval dining table, in a bedroom, Stephen asked Francis, "How old are you?" Francis said, "I was born October 28, 1909, so I'm sixty-eight." "And I was born February 28, 1909," Stephen said. "So I'm six months older than you," Francis said. "Six months younger," Stephen said. Francis looked puzzled. "Oh, yes," he said. Stephen said, "And you were in Berlin while I was there. I wonder why we didn't meet." "You probably went to different places," Francis said. "I used to be in the clubs all the time." "So was I," Stephen said. "Then we were probably in the same club at the same time," Francis said.

"How did you get to Berlin?" I asked Francis.

Francis seemed to like being asked questions about himself. "Oh," he said, "my father found me wearing my mother's underclothes, and to put me right he sent me to a friend—like him, a horse trainer. This was in Ireland. I left home to go with my father's friend, who took me to Berlin. He was very rich and we stayed in a grand hotel. That was the first time I had sex with anyone. From there, I went to Paris. My mother



"I'm one of those people who feel upset about the economy. All I need is the means to express it."

sent me three pounds a week. I never really went back to Ireland."

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When Francis invited Nikos and me out, it was usually with Stephen. Sometime in the late seventies, he invited us to meet his new friend, Bill. We hadn't known he'd had a friend since George. Bill was an electrician. Sonia said a telephone engineer. He was a broad, very masculine man who wanted to become a policeman in New York and who was intelligent enough to know that he really only wanted to satisfy a fantasy he had about New York cops. His life, it seemed, was devoted to satisfying his sexual fantasies. He'd been all over the United States, and Canada, too, and he could tell you where the best bars were, where the men liked one thing or another. He said that, because of the way he looked, every time he went into a queer bar in America the bouncer would say to him, "You do realize, sir, that this is a club for homosexuals?" He loved asking policemen on the street for the way to bars and clubs that, he said, smiling, they of course knew were queer. Bill's smile was wide and clean and very bright white.

After dinner at Langan's Brasserie, for which Francis insisted on paying, we all got into a taxi to go to a club in Leicester Square called Adam's. The taxi stopped and started, stopped and started in the Friday late-night traffic in the West End. Stephen was frowning. Once we got to Leicester Square, Stephen said he thought he'd go home—it was still early enough to catch the tube.

Adam's was a large, crowded club with gold chandeliers and gold-framed mirrors, and it was very dark and so smoky you could hardly see. Francis, Bill, Nikos, and I stood by the bar. Francis kept giving Bill twenty-pound notes to buy bottles of champagne. We talked a lot about sex. Bill said he liked to be fucked, fist-fucked, and he also liked, from time to time, "G.B.H." Nikos asked, "What's that?" "Grievous bodily harm," Bill said, and smiled his smile. "And you've had it?" Francis asked him. "Only a couple of times," Bill said. "Real welts and weals?" Francis asked. "Oh, yes," Bill answered. "I enjoy it, but it has to be done by someone you like. And there's always the danger that they won't be able to stop when you want them to." "Well," Francis said, "I like a little G.B.H. now and then. I had a friend—he finally killed himself—who had a collection of whips he kept at my place. A while ago, I took someone there who said he was interested in whips, and I showed him the collection." Francis laughed. "Well, I undressed and got on my fish-net stockings—" "Black?" Nikos asked. "Of course black, stupid," Francis said. "And he started to beat me. But he got carried away. He wouldn't stop. I'm a total coward. In nothing but my black fish-net stockings, I ran out into Reece Mews." He laughed loudly.

A tall, blond young man came up to us and asked, "Who are you all? You all look so interesting, so glum." Not even Francis spoke to him. He asked Nikos and me, "Do you two live together?" "Why do you think that?" I asked. "I can tell," he said. A friend behind him said, "Come on, let's go, they look creepy."

We were in the club until three-thirty. Nikos and I went only when Francis said he'd go. Bill remained with a fellow who looked like a Greek priest.

Outside, Francis said, "Bill and I spent four days together and discovered we were incompatible, because we both like the same thing. But we've remained friends."

I ran around the square trying to get a taxi, but none would stop for me, though their lights were lit. Francis, who hadn't moved, put out his hand, and a limousine, not a taxi, stopped in front of him. A young man rolled down the window and said, "You look like three cold gentlemen. I'll drive you wherever you want to go." Francis got in beside him, Nikos and I in the back. "Now, what have you been doing up at this hour when all honest people are in bed?" the driver asked. Francis said, with that short, shrugging laugh he had, "Not being honest." He asked the driver his name. "George," the driver said. "And what's your name?" "Francis." "Is that Mr. Francis?" "Mr., Mrs., Miss—however you like it," Francis said. The driver left Nikos and me off first.

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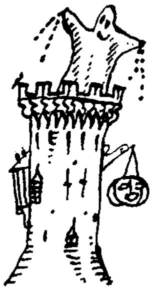
Just a year or so later, Francis said he had a new friend he wanted us to meet. His name was John, and he ran a pub in the East End of London. On a Sunday morning, Nikos and I drove Francis there. John Edwards had black curly hair and wore a smart gray-flannel suit. Nikos and I were in jeans. We had drinks in the saloon, where young men were playing pool. John's boyfriend was among them. A pretty, blond young man with pimples along his jaw, he couldn't go more than a mile from the pub, John said, as he'd been convicted of a crime and was awaiting sentencing. After some drinks, we all went to another pub, which closed while we were there, but we stayed on behind the locked doors, and met a number of middle-aged Cockney queens and their boyfriends. They and John and his boyfriend and Francis and Nikos and I, about twelve of us, went out for a late lunch in a Chinese restaurant. One bleached-blond queen said to Francis, "So you paint pictures, do you, Francis? Excuse my ignorance, but what kind of pictures do you paint?" This was all in East End Cockney. Francis said, "Well, it's difficult to say." "Like, do you paint landscapes or people?" "Sometimes landscapes, sometimes people." "Do you paint pictures of dogs, Francis?" someone else asked. "I like pictures of dogs meself." "I used to paint dogs years ago. I don't anymore." "What do you do with your paintings, then? Do you show them on the fence along the park in Bayswater? I seen paintings, on a Sunday, all along the railings." Francis, laughing, said, "I haven't come to that yet. I might soon." John said, "His paintings are fucking awful. He can't even draw as good as that Piss-casso, and fucking awful he was, too." "Right," Francis said. "I can't."



In the car, riding back through the West End, Francis said, "I feel an idiot among them. I feel they know so much more than I do."

"What?" Nikos asked.

"I don't know," Francis said.

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Shortly after Sonia Orwell's death, in 1980, Francis invited me to lunch, to talk about her. He asked me to his mews flat for noon. I'd never been in it before. He showed me his studio, with a narrow path through banks of rags and rubbish, and a number of small, blank canvases, which, he said, the Marlborough Gallery had sent him. "You see," he said, "small paintings sell better than big ones."

We drank two or three of what I believe he called Dead Dogs, sitting at a bare table at the end of the long, narrow bed-sitting-room. Bare bulbs hung from the ceiling on long wires. Though an electric fire was on, there was a chill. I asked, "Do you think, as I do, that Sonia was a totally pessimistic person?"

Francis said, "Totally, totally pessimistic. You see, I am at least optimistic in the moment."

"And," I said, "optimistic in your creating, because to create is to be optimistic. But Sonia did not believe she could create anything. At least, that's what I imagine."

He put his large, red hand to his chin and said, "As much as one can be right in anything one imagines, I think you're right."

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Every time thereafter when Stephen, Nikos, and I went out to dinner with Francis, John was with him. Francis's relationship with John appeared to be the most lasting of his life. And they seemed never to fight. One evening, as Stephen, Nikos, and I crossed the cobblestones of Reece Mews to Francis's flat, Francis leaned out the window above the garage and waved at us, and he was waiting for us, smiling, at the top of the steep stairs. He seemed very happy. Then he said John was supposed to come but was drunk, and Francis laughed at this, the laughter implying that of course John was drunk. In the bedroom end of his flat was an oval bed covered with a multicolored spread, and next to the bed was a bookcase piled with books.

After three bottles of champagne, we all went to a nearby Italian restaurant in a cellar for dinner. Stephen mentioned that he had been going to the doctor for tests, though he was in perfect health, really. Blinking a lot, he said, "Somehow I'm not frightened of death. I think I was brought up not to be frightened of it but to consider it as something that would inevitably come and that must not be made a fuss over. I suppose I don't think myself important enough to make a fuss about dying."

This is when I heard Francis say, "I'm frightened of death. I'm very frightened of it." He laughed. "Of course, I may die tomorrow."

I asked Francis, "Why are you frightened of dying?"

"Because I love life," he answered. "I love it."

"So do I," Stephen said.

"David doesn't," Nikos said.

Francis said to me, "Life's all we've got, and we can't want to lose it."

A waiter came to Francis and whispered in his ear, then left. "It's John," Francis said to us. "He's out in the street, drunk. I'd better go get him." He left, and in a little while came back with John, who did not appear to be very drunk.

With John, the talk changed. We talked about how sorry we were that he didn't get the fancier pub he'd been negotiating for. He didn't seem to mind, and said, "It don't matter." Then he took out a photograph of himself and his boyfriend, who had been allowed out of prison on a three-day pass. John wanted to give the photograph to Francis, and asked Nikos, sitting next to him, if Nikos could spell out the dedication, so that he, John, could write it, as he couldn't spell words but he could write letters. Using Stephen's pen, John wrote "FOR MY FRANCIS WITH MY LOVE JOHN."

After John gave Francis the photograph, he leaned across the table and said to him, "I want to tell you something," and Francis leaned forward so John could whisper in his ear. Suddenly, Francis sat back and said in a loud and angry voice, "That's ridiculous, and I'm not going to listen to it. That you want to kill yourself is ridiculous. I'm not going to listen." John smiled. He held a hand over the table, and Francis clasped it. John said, "I love you." Francis said, "And I love you, and because I do I'm not going to hear you talk such nonsense." Still holding Francis's hand, John turned to us and said, "I love Francis. I love my friend in prison, and I love Francis, though, you know, my love for Francis is non-sexual, and maybe that means I love him even more than my friend in prison."

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Francis had never attacked me, but one evening, when he and John and Stephen were having dinner at Nikos's and my flat, I felt he objected to everything I said and was about to attack me. This made me say some stupid things. John seemed completely unaware that Francis was aggressive toward me, and was, himself, loving, in the gentle way he had. Perhaps it was only because of John that Francis didn't let go at me.

Instead, Francis got angry at Nikos, when Nikos said he was against experiments on animals. Francis, who obviously thought this sentimental, said, "Of course they're going to experiment on animals. Of course." "It's just as horrible as if they were experimenting on babies," Nikos said. Francis answered, "Well, yes, of course it is, and of course there's no reason why they shouldn't experiment on babies instead of animals, but they won't."

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A month or so later, Francis invited Nikos and me, this time without Stephen, to a restaurant. We waited an hour for him and he didn't appear. I wondered if that was a signal from him that our friendship was suddenly over.

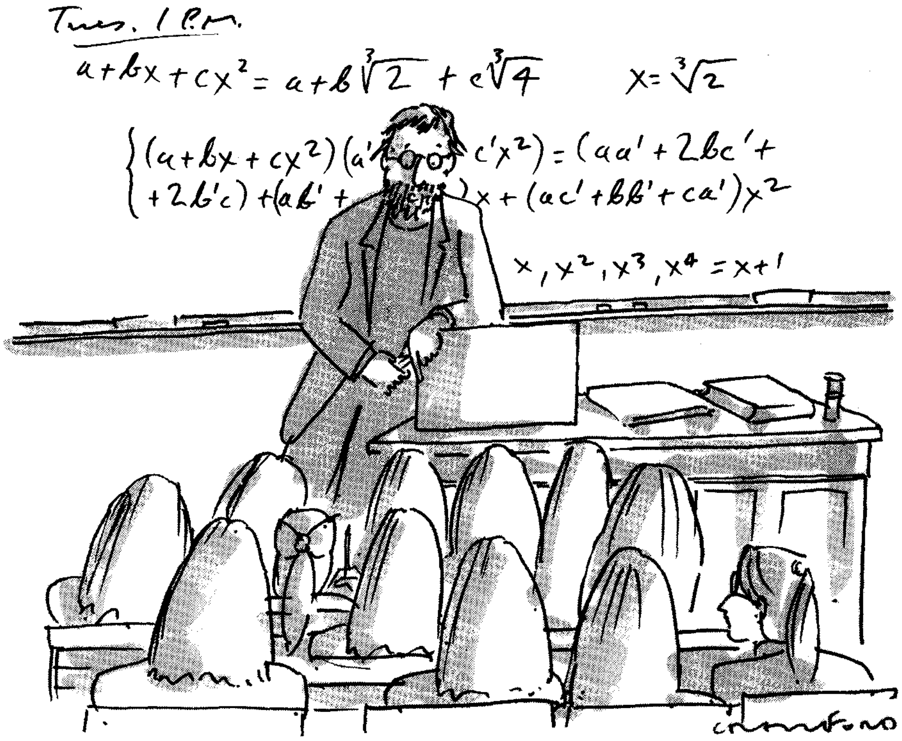
But in 1985 we received invitations to the opening of the grand retrospective of Francis's work at the Tate Gallery. There were long tables covered with white cloths, and waiters standing behind the tables serving champagne, and cooks serving from whole salmons.

Going from room to room to look at the paintings, I was taken especially by the strange works done in the seventies and early eighties of sand dunes and jets of water in empty rooms, which were, I told myself, the least illustrational of his paintings. Returning to where the party was centered, I saw John. He was as excited as if the party were being given for him. He was wearing a beautiful suit. He told me he was very angry. One of Francis's old cronies from the Colony Room had, on this most important occasion, asked Francis for fifty pounds. John had insisted Francis not give the money. John said to me, "I was having a nice time until that happened. Francis has given him hundreds of pounds, more than hundreds, and he never pays it back. If you borrow, you pay back. Fuck it."

Francis's friend Dickie Chopping came up to us and said, "Francis is going around to look at his pictures. Why don't you join us?" We followed Francis from picture to picture—"Study for Portrait of Van Gogh II," "Lying Figure with Hypodermic Syringe," "Crucifixion 1965"—and, standing for a moment before each one, he would laugh and say, "Isn't it loathsome? I loathe it. I really loathe it."

He was very gracious to everyone.

I left the group to look at the paintings again, by myself, wondering what Francis meant when he said he loathed them. I stopped before the great "Trip-


Tues. 1 P.M.
$a+bx+cx^2=a+b\sqrt[3]{2}+c\sqrt[3]{4}$
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$(a+bx+cx^2)(a'$ … $c'x^2)=(aa'+2bc'+$
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"There is, however, nothing in the dean's regulations to preclude a semester of profoundly suggestive and, ultimately, frustrating consensual eye contact."

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tych May-June 1973," the one depicting the death of George Dyer in the hotel in Paris. In the left-hand panel, George is doubled up on a toilet; in the right one, he is vomiting into a washbasin; and in the central one he is half dissolved in blackness that pours out through an open doorway. The triptych was, from a certain point of view, as graphic an illustration as anyone might have wanted of a vision of an age of horror which Francis denied his work was about. I could understand someone wondering if it mattered which people Francis painted, as his vision so overwhelmed the face that the face belonged more to Francis's vision than to the sitter, though the sitters were, as far as I knew, always close friends. Perhaps "instinct" had become for Francis another form of illustration. But, then, as I studied the triptych of George, what struck me, and what I would never have thought of, because such an idea would have seemed as irrelevant to Francis's works as to, say, Henry Moore's, was how deeply, how essentially, how passionately, how heartbreakingly this triptych had to do with Francis himself, Francis reacting to the death of someone he loved.

And to go from this triptych to the 1973 "Self-Portrait"—which has Francis almost hugging the kind of washbasin over which George, vomiting, died, and one of Francis's hands reaching into the washbasin and the other hand placed over his head, and the features of his face contorted in grief—was a shock. I realized for the first time that what Francis put into his paintings at their best—and the triptych was, I knew, a masterpiece—was, as the most brutal fact, simply himself. And to go from the portraits of George, with whom he had a tortured sexual relationship, to the almost sentimental portraits of John, with whom, as David Sylvester has said, he had a strange but calm father-son relationship, was to see just how deeply personal Francis was in his work.

No doubt I am now, after his death, interpolating somewhat this reaction to his paintings of George and John back into a time when Francis was very much alive. But I know I did have the reaction I described while I stood before the paintings. This, however, became flat and faded out when I returned to Francis, and I realize that it was he himself who made it impossible for me to see his paintings in the personal way I now see them, as if I'd felt that Francis would have loathed, and just by his overwhelming presence have stopped, my seeing in them his own, exposed heart.

Francis's death did not, for me, depersonalize his work but made it more personal. And this, I think, is happening for others who knew him only in his work. Linda Nochlin has told me that one of the most interesting reactions to the Bacon retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in 1990 was among the younger, postmodernist critics: they were drawn to the paintings not in spite of their being confessional but because they were confessional—because of what the work said about sex and history and belief from Bacon's particular point of view. However good or bad the biographies written by Daniel Farson and Andrew Sinclair, they both sent me back to the paintings, to look at them with—what can I say?—tenderness.

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When, after the show, Francis invited Nikos and me to dinner at the White Tower, a Greek restaurant, I wondered if he'd show up, and was reluctant to go. But he did come, with John. He didn't drink much—one glass of wine, which he didn't finish—and was sober when he condemned painters he knew, calling the painters, all men, "she." John's reaction was simply to smile a little, completely without irony, and change the subject, as if he didn't understand and weren't interested in what Francis was condemning.

But then Francis, Nikos, and I got onto those big subjects that Francis seemed to love to talk about. We talked about what he called "the great sea" that is in everyone and that most people are unaware of. When I asked him if he believed there was any way one could make oneself aware of it, his eyes went out of focus, and Nikos said quickly, "I think Francis would say being aware of it is a matter of luck," and Francis said, "Yes, luck." John sat back and patiently let us talk. I realized I would never have a friendship with Francis that would go deeper than such rather depersonalized talk.

After a pause in our conversation, John told us he had a new house, a big house in the country, with outbuildings and two acres of farmland, where he now lived with his boyfriend. They'd been together, John said, for fourteen years, and they had made love every day, sometimes twice a day, except when his friend was in prison. "I'm real horny," John said. He said he'd decided to live in the country because if they continued to live in London they'd end up killing themselves with drink or get some terrible sexually transmitted disease. About the house, he said, "Of course, Francis helped me." Then he said he had had one of the outbuildings done up into a cottage for Francis to stay in when he visited. Francis raised his shoulders and let them drop and laughed and said, "I loathe the country." John said, "The cottage has got a nice view." "I loathe views," Francis said. They both laughed, John very amused by Francis.

Before we separated, John invited Nikos and me to his house in the country for Easter Sunday lunch.

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The house was in Suffolk. It was a brick house, and its outbuildings were behind a brick wall, in very flat green countryside over which the wind blew hard. There were about twenty cars parked in a field outside the brick wall. Within the gate we saw no one, and the place looked deserted. It was only when we approached the house that I saw, through a window, Francis sitting at a table, talking to someone and smiling.

About sixty people were in the house, most of them John's family and friends from the East End, and some of them queens. I met John's mother and father, a retired publican, and the rest of the family. They were all friendly and talkative, and called me Dave. "Whenever you want to come to my house in Portugal, Dave, you let me know," one of John's brothers said. I said I'd like that.

I wandered about the house, which was furnished with oversized Victorian-Italian-Renaissance pieces. The mantels of the fireplaces in the downstairs public rooms were elaborate. On the walls were many framed reproductions of Francis's paintings, among them paintings of John. In one room, John's boyfriend, sunk in an armchair he seemed never to get out of, was smoking pot.

In yet another room, I found Nikos listening to Ian, the man who ran the Colony Room, shouting at Denis Wirth-Miller, "You're a fake. A total fake. You're a terrible painter. The only person who would ever buy one of your paintings is the Queen Mother." Denis, who, at around seventy, looked like a withered boy, just smiled. His friend Dickie Chopping was standing in the room, too, but turned away. I stood by Nikos and listened. As Ian continued to shout at Denis, Francis, wavering as he walked, his lips pressed together and his eyes staring, came into the room, and he, too, stood and listened, with his head lowered, looking like a priest listening to a confession. When Ian paused he raised his head and said calmly, "It's absolutely true, Denis is a fake. That's what he is, a genuine fake." Denis went on smirking, his teeth showing. I left.

I went to look at the outbuildings, one of them the cottage done up for Francis. The interior of another, long outbuilding had been converted into a snooker room with a huge snooker table and a fringed, green lamp hanging low over it. At one end of the room were floor-to-ceiling mirrors and a bar, and over a beam of what must have once been a barn roof dangled a pair of boxing gloves. Some men were playing snooker.

Going back to the main house to find Nikos, I met him coming out. He said, "You shouldn't have left. In a strange way, those men were showing affection for one another."

By the time we got back to the snooker room, Francis was there. He came to me, when Nikos left to watch the snooker players, as if he had had, for a long while, something he wanted to tell me, and he'd decided to tell me now. I thought I saw anger in his eyes. I was standing against a wall, and he was in front of me, leaning toward me. Then the door opened and in came a group of East End friends of John's, and Francis jerked around to look at them and said, "I loathe parties. I simply loathe them." John was there, among his friends, and he came to us. Francis, holding out both his hands to him, said, with a wide smile, "What a lovely party, John. Such a lovely party."

Eventually, Nikos and I had to leave. When we said goodbye to John and Francis, Francis said he'd walk us out to the car. Outside the brick wall, in a field, we stood in the wind talking about John.

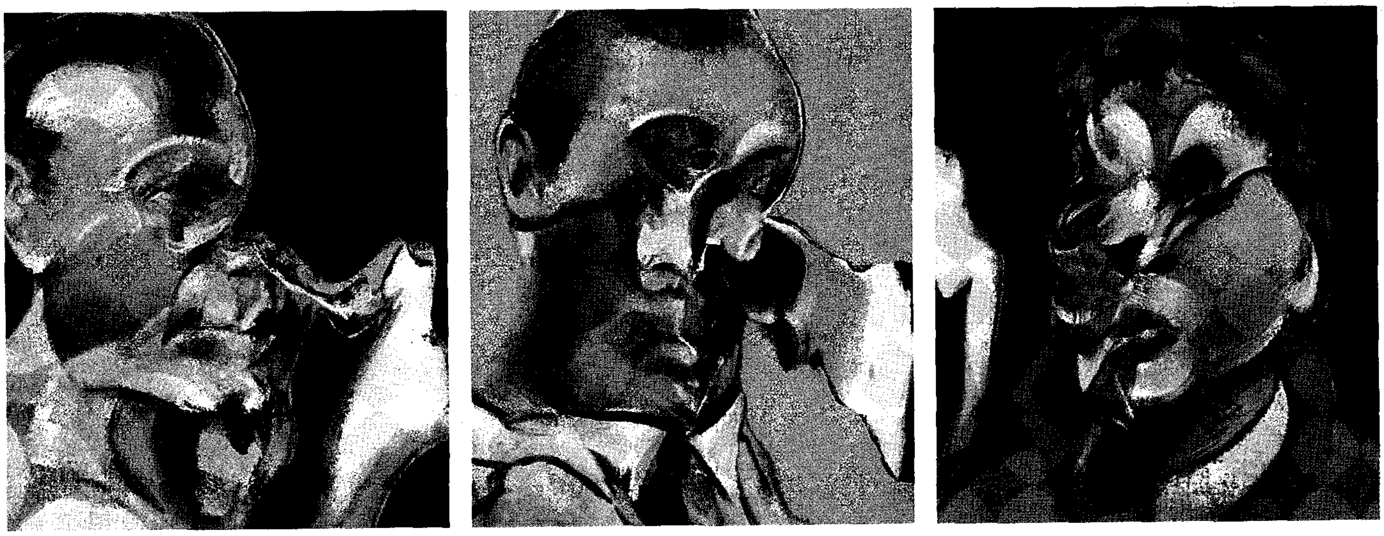
Nikos said, "He's very special."

"He's very special," Francis said.

"He is," I said.

"He can't read or write," Francis said, "but, you know, there really is something very special about him. You see, John is an innocent."

At the car, Nikos and I turned back to wave to Francis, still standing in the field. He was wearing a suit and tie. His thin dyed hair was blown by the wind. He smiled and waved. The green field behind him was flat and gave way to equally flat green-gray countryside. ◆



PRIVATE COLLECTION

"Three Studies for Portraits Including Self-Portrait," 1969.

ANNUNCIATION WITH A BULLET IN IT

1.

There is a doorway in the air, a graduation
from nothing to nothing.
A brief history of mankind.
A stammer between invisibles.
The soft jingling of a chain.

Wings pass through it. Something homeless.
As where an eyelid
opening arrives instantly on
time at
the world.
Blink.
Are they continuous? *Two times two*

and then four walls, a window,
proof, a lute—jingling—an
appetite . . . Forgive me,

there is a doorway through which we must pass
together,
you and I.
Made of words, it sounds like "what-if-nothing." Of flesh,
an eyeblink, mossy. Of the
world, something off
the flying bird gone on—the arc—something infinitesimal

though seething with little facts—
a doorway of little facts seething—

2.

You must find it.
You must be merciless and find it.
The secret in it. Graffiti on air. Wingscrape. Listen—
a single note is hurled
onto the evening air.
A man's name? A low quick shriek?
A screen door slams beneath.
House-shake.
Stillness.
Ravens cawing overhead . . .

And on the rug tonight, holding our dog someone has shot,
large, black-and-white, long-haired, near death,
whispering the few commands it knows as praise—*stay, stay*—
I happen to glance up out the window placed
just above the two of us
at something seen through the empty tree out there—

my hand stroking his unconscious head,
jingling his name-and-registration
by mistake—

3.

Like a crust on something, that sky—
something down here somewhat viscous, blinking—
a crust forming to seal us off—
hiss of the heating system switching on—
moonlight on fur and fingers in it, caressing—

4.

FEAR NOT says the angel
of air,
a bullioned slant on the emptiness
I reach my hand into.
FEAR NOT, or so I think where my fingers

feel themselves *lessen* and the invisible *thicken* . . .

The weight was coming from outside.
A sleekness removed from the shifting rest of things.
Something glass-like I can make out—a palm? an eye?—
some pressure in the dust?—
FEAR NOT (loud in the air)—
and more disturbance on the dust—lipmarks? fingermarks?—
(but not *letters*) (I tried to read)
out through the window now smoke from the neighbor's stack
moving off
aslant
(me watching it closely) (for *a time*) but then
FEAR NOT and I look
back—day *breaking* now, corners pushed free, outlines
cut clean,
confusion coalescing and settling, dustlike, into this
apparition: the room (I notice myself
nodding to the room):
chair, fourposter bed, sixteen-pane window in
its frame—
a violent stillness—
as if it had all suddenly just *taken place*,
it the angel, *it* the seizing up of the great reverberation into this
place
FEAR NOT—my left hand feeling the spun-wool blanket round the dog—
right down in the nailtip—
warp, filament—
every now and then a knot—
and how *I* must be the passage
through,
up through the hand,
and the light in through my eyes,
and the scent of the lilacs in the glass vase from Venice,
and the color in too (four distinct purples),
and the facetted convexity of the reddish glass,

and *Venice* too (twenty years ago),
that man's long voice

still screaming at us from the passing boat—

then the louder plash of our single oar—drowning
him out—
all of it searing really—

so that I have to sit very very still,
light brightening,
in it the soft jingling of a chain,
a chatter of wheels upon tracks . . .

5.

Then she said, "It is Sunday May 28 my birthday.
I am celebrating packing for the long journey.
A youthful S.S. man, blond, like an angel, just
informed us
we are to rise at 4 A.M. for the journey.
Anyone not up at 4 A.M. will get a *Kugel.*
A bullet simply for not getting up?

6.

Mother's face, her eyes, cannot be described.
She knows there is nothing beyond this.
She keeps smiling at me—I can't stand it.
I am silently pleading with her: *stop smiling.*
I gaze at her tenderly and smile back.

7.

Six months, four of us are still alive,
there is a sudden selection.
Rachel, our little sister, will not possibly be able to
make it.
She is all too ready.
It cannot happen.
Mengele is selecting a little distance away.
Frantically, we try to make Rachel healthier-looking,

older-looking.
One of us has a piece of cloth.
We place it on Rachel's head as a kerchief.
We make her stand on her tiptoes—(she
pleads she has no
strength for such superhuman
efforts)—we pinch her face
to an unnatural
redness. We pinch her and pinch her.
Mengele passes her by.
This day the oven has been cheated of our
precious sister.

8.

We touch each other.
Cipi, Chicha, Rachel, Isabella. We seem to be alive.
Words come out of our lips, we must be alive.
The Germans look like things we have seen before.
We are not sure they are real.

9.

We are marching in the blizzard.
To be five in the row is the prisoners'
responsibility.
So we have to find an unattached girl.
Always when we find one it is never
permanent.
Sooner or later she is taken to the crematorium.
It is a constant struggle—

10.

Rachel is coughing up badly—
on one foot she has a torn leather shoe, on the other
a Dutch wooden one—
in the blizzard she can barely drag herself along—
between the four of us we are missing one shoe—
whichever one tries to aid Rachel by giving
up a shoe
will be the one to be taken—
in the past we have always found
some kind of solution—

11.

The little baby born yesterday
is now off to the ovens.
We all touch the little one before she is
wrapped in
the piece of paper
and handed over to
the *Blockälteste*—

12.

. . . lord, the *Oberscharführer* will choose me, I know
he will.
I can dig the grave, but please, please
don't choose me
to carry the body.
I am just a child.
I cannot carry the dead body.
Have mercy.
The cold dead body I cannot touch."

13.

Said the angel,
I have analyzed thousands of documents,
I have tirelessly pursued specialists and historians,
tirelessly,
I have tried in vain to find a single former
deportee
capable of proving to me that he had really seen
with his own eyes
a gas chamber
TIRELESSLY
(wingprint in dust) (smoke) the

only acceptable proof that it was used to kill
is that one died from it—
(tirelessly)—
but if one is dead one cannot testify
that it is
on account of such a chamber—

there is, therefore, no gas chamber
(Fear not)
there is, therefore, no place that can be
identified
as a gas chamber
(Fear not)
therefore one has been fooled as to the existence
of gas chambers
(Fear not)

Then (lifting) (dust-swirl in the room)

a plaintiff is someone who has incurred damages
and who disposes of the means to prove it,

one becomes a victim
if one loses those means

FEAR NOT

14.

Once in this room—
I was a child of ten. It was winter, afternoon.

There was a dark-green velvet couch where now there are
this rug and dog—
Someone was humming a half-remembered tune
—the window let it in—
sometimes she hummed—sometimes the words
surfaced
and a phrase . . .
Hear her soul go up

into the words—
the lover by the stream,
the girl in summer—then
subside, the song back down
into the hands,
clothespins snapping

onto the long free line . . .
I settled deeper into the pillowy green.
The hum disappeared, or so it seemed.
I was holding a paperback copy of "Anna
Karenin,"
the print very small—

I looked at the girl on the cover again.
Swift whirr of heating ducts clicking off.
Trucks going by beyond the wall.
Clink of utensils being stacked.
One phrase sung out—soft
jingling—events . . .

When Anna walks into the well-lit room,
black velvet dress, whiteness of shoulders bared,
Vronsky's eyes
fall suddenly on her so that her *being*
seen is
born. I tried to see past her. But her black waist

blocked the whole view,

black hourglass the stillness would use to enter,
swirling, breathless,
yet in itself nothing,
not fear, not desire (I knew that even then),

not hope, not even an awakening—just
a rip where evidence exists,

but not *of* anything,

a wing of singed bits,
made of the glances that reach it,
swirling yet very still,
a name in the continuous hum,
a scratch in the dust where only light seems to have
pressed,
ticking, twirling, incredibly still, I squint, I
cannot see

the words, it's all
one universal, stubborn black
out of which—*in* which?—the dark words *seem*,
overlapping layers of them—rows—as feathers
on a wing
are packed—I rub
my eyes, humming gone too, green gone
where velvet was,
although I feel my
weight on it—nothing coming from *outside*
the whole room swirling—
distant music or is it
a chain—even the window gone

though blacks still swarm there, many-eyed—

and many-eyed and many-limbed the black where
the page

had been—(I think,
Perhaps I am the word inside the glance that picks
me up?)—
while in a corner now the black begins (*I will*
be read?) to rip,
letting what lustrous thing leak in—an eye? a name?—
Why are you reading in the dark?—
It's night, darling; it's dinnertime—

15.

The second night the dog woke up.
Raised his head as if in a sudden hurry.
We tried to keep him still but he wanted to walk.
Tried very slowly, roaming, wanting to go
elsewhere.
We thought it miraculous, that it meant something.
That he should live with the bullet in
his heart.
We watched him very carefully.
Clinking of tags from room to room.

Icy the star I watched above him as he took a
few steps
in the yard.
Meaning? meaning? shrieked the small facts,
the clinking
gleaming chain of them,
the parts of wings whirring like a heating
system—close in,
far off—

the hum of my listening—

the whirring like an appetite—an engine's
appetite—fear not—

16.

And the third night? And the fourth? And then? And
then?

17.

"Oh but here is a piece of bread," said Chicha—
"Please eat it—Please please make
yourself live—

You must not think I took it from myself—

I really really am not hungry—"

—Jorie Graham

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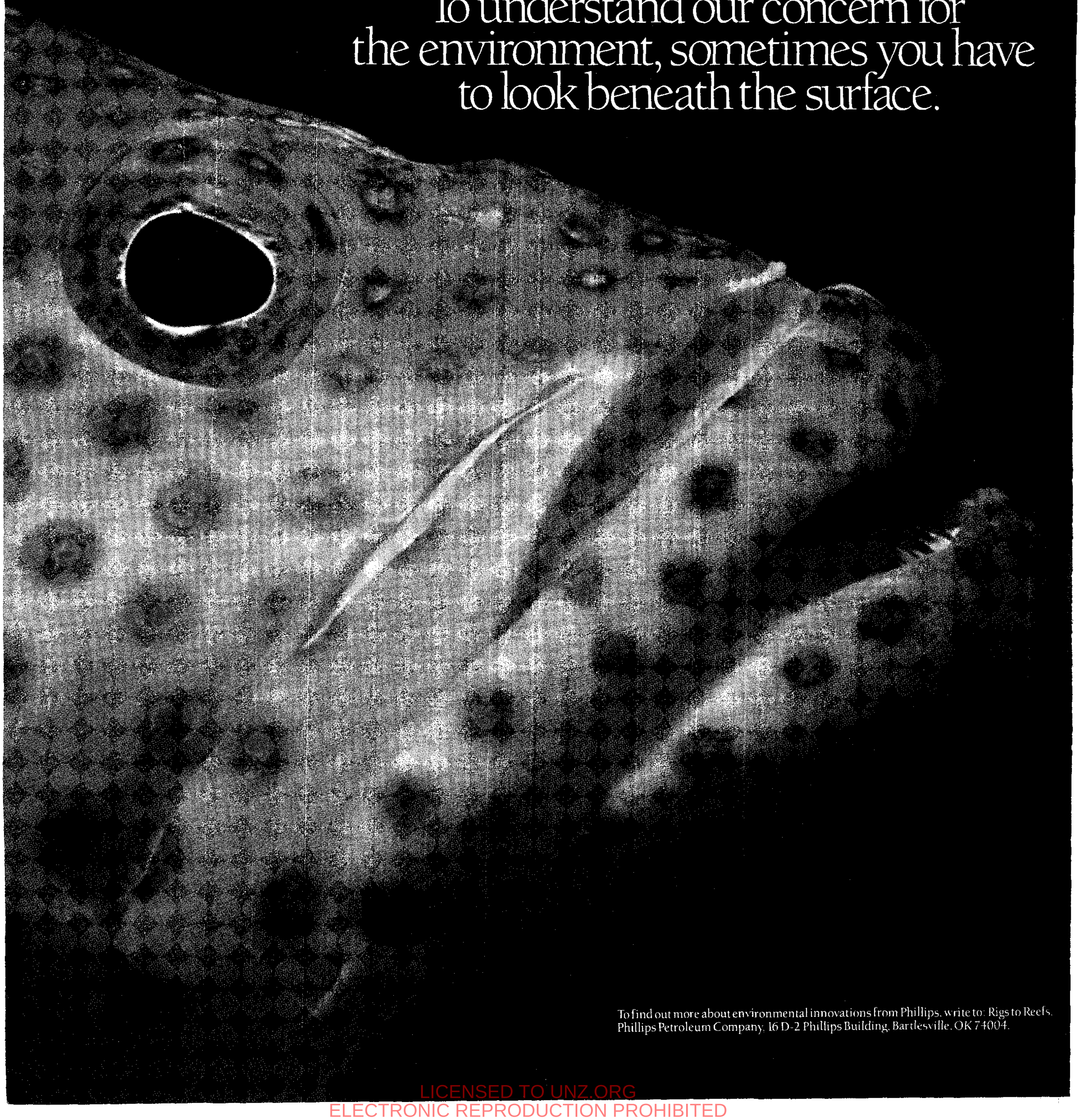

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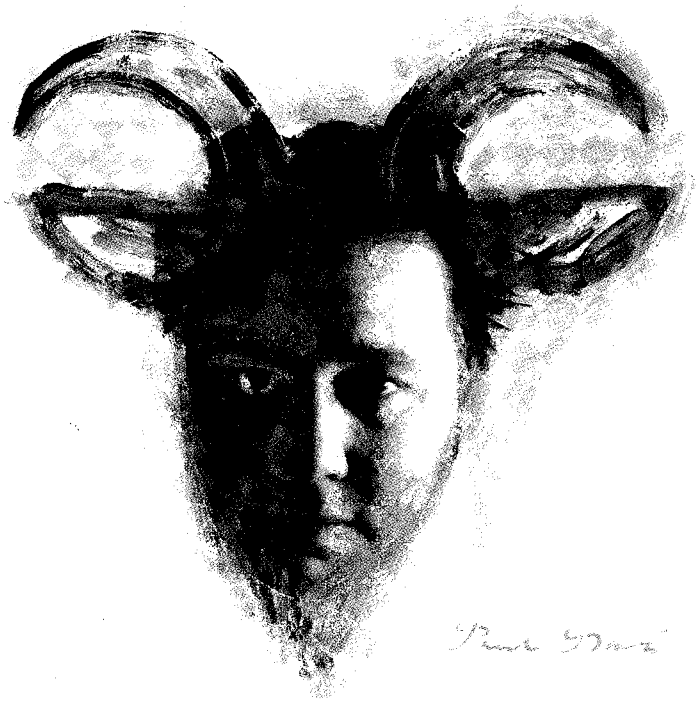
THE CRITICS

ANNALS OF COMEDY

THE GOAT BOY RISES

BY JOHN LAHR

On October 1st, the comedian Bill Hicks, after doing his twelfth gig on the David Letterman show, became the first comedy act to be censored at CBS's Ed Sullivan Theatre, where Letterman is now in residence, and where Elvis Presley was famously censored in 1956. Presley was not allowed to be shown from the waist down. Hicks was not allowed to be shown at all. It's not what's in Hicks' pants but what's in his head that scared the CBS panjandrums. Hicks, a tall thirty-one-year-old Texan with a pudgy face aged beyond its years from hard living on the road, is no motormouth vulgarian but an exhilarating comic thinker in a renegade class all his own. Until the ban, which, according to Hicks, earned him "more attention than my other eleven appearances on Letterman times one hundred," Hicks' caustic observations and mischievous cultural connections had found a wide audience in England, where he is something of a cult figure. I caught up with Hicks backstage on a rainy Sunday last November at the Dominion Theatre, in London, where a record-breaking crowd of two thousand Brits was packed so tightly that they were standing three deep at the back of the dress circle to hear Hicks deliver some acid home truths about the U.S.A., which to him stands for United States of Advertising. Hicks thinks against society and insists on the importance of this intellectual freedom as a way to inspire others to think for themselves. "To me, the comic is the guy who says 'Wait a minute' as the consensus forms," Hicks told me as we climbed the stairs to his dressing room. "He's the antithesis of the mob mentality. The comic is a flame—like Shiva the Destroyer, toppling idols no matter what they are. He keeps cutting everything back to the moment."



The Texan comedian Bill Hicks: A cult figure in England, he recently ended up on David Letterman's cutting-room floor.

PAUL DAVIS

Even then, the talk about courting comic danger had Hicks worrying about his prospects in America. "Comedy in the States has been totally gutted," he told me when we'd settled into the dressing room. "It's commercialized. They don't have people on TV who have points of view, because that defies the status quo, and we can't have that in the totalitarian mind-control government that runs the fuckin' airwaves. I can't get a shot there. I get David Letterman a lot. I love Letterman, but every time I go on, we have tiffs over material. They love me, but his people have this fictitious mainstream audience they think they play to. It's untrue. It doesn't exist. I like doing the show, but it's almost like working a puzzle: How can I be me in the context of doing this material? The best thing I do is make connections. I connect *everything*. It's hard to do it in six minutes."

Hicks certainly went for broke and pronounced his real comic self in the banned Letterman performance, which he'll be reprising in New York at Caroline's Comedy Club on October 27th, and which he wrote out for me in a thirty-nine-page letter that also recounts his version of events. Hicks had to write out his set because the tape of it, which the Letterman people said they'd send three weeks ago, had not yet reached him. He doubts it ever will. But the routine, which he had prepared for a Letterman appearance a week earlier (he was bumped because the show ran long), had been, he wrote, "approved and reapproved" by a segment producer of the show. Indicating stage directions and his recollection

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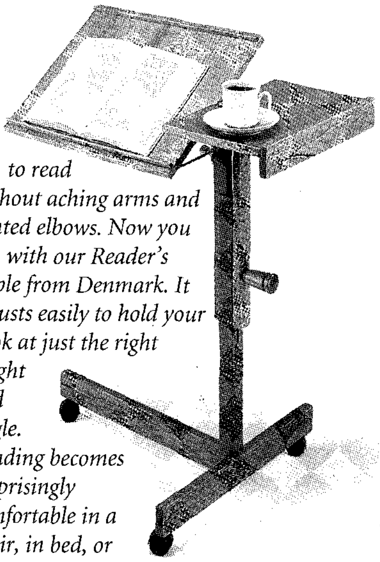

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of significant audience response, Hicks set out some of the "hot points" to which the network took exception.

You know who's really bugging me these days? These pro-lifers . . . (*Smattering of applause.*)

You ever look at their faces? . . . "I'm pro-life!" (*Here Bill makes a pinched face of hate and fear; his lips are pursed as though he's just sucked on a lemon.*) "I'm pro-life!" Boy, they look it, don't they? They just exude joie de vivre. You just want to hang with them and play Trivial Pursuit all night long. (*Audience chuckles.*)

You know what bugs me about them? If you're so pro-life, do me a favor—don't lock arms and block medical clinics. If you're so pro-life, lock arms and block cemeteries. (*Audience laughs.*) . . . I want to see pro-lifers at funerals opening caskets—"Get out!" Then I'd really be impressed by their mission. (*Audience laughs and applauds.*)

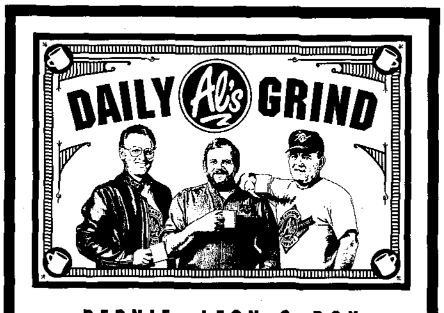
I've been travelling a lot lately. I was over in Australia during Easter. It was interesting to note they celebrate Easter the same way we do—commemorating the death and resurrection of Jesus by telling our children a giant bunny rabbit . . . left chocolate eggs in the night. (*Audience laughs.*)

Gee, I wonder why we're so messed up as a race. You know, I've read the Bible. Can't find the words "bunny" or "chocolate" in the whole book. (*Audience laughs.*)

I think it's interesting how people act on their beliefs. A lot of Christians, for instance, wear crosses around their necks. Nice sentiment, but do you think when Jesus comes back, he's really going to want to look at a cross? (*Audience laughs. Bill makes a face of pain and horror.*)

Ow! *Maybe* that's why he hasn't shown up yet. (*As Jesus looking down from Heaven*) "I'm not going, Dad. No, they're still wearing crosses—they totally missed the point. When they start wearing fishes, I might go back again. . . . No, I'm not going. . . . O.K., I'll tell you what—I'll go back as a bunny."

Hicks, who delivered his monologue dressed not in his usual gunslinger black but in "bright fall colors—an outfit bought just for the show and reflective of my bright and cheerful mood," seemed to have a lot to smile about. Letterman—who Hicks says greeted him as he sat down to talk with "Good set, Bill! Always nice to have you drop by with an uplifting message!" and signed off saying, "Bill, enjoy answering your mail for the next few weeks"—had been seen to laugh. The word in the Green Room was also good. A couple of hours later, Hicks was back in his hotel, wearing nothing but a towel, when the call came from Robert Morton, the executive producer of the Letterman show, telling him he'd been deep-sixed. Hicks sat down on the bed. "I don't understand, Robert. What's the problem? I



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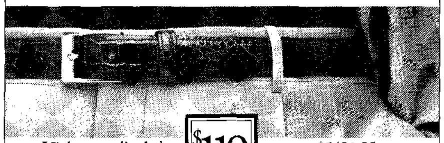

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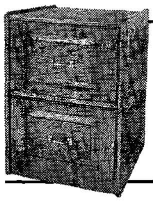

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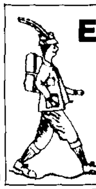

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thought the show went great." The following is a condensed version of what Hicks remembers from the long conversation.

"You killed out there," Morton said, and went on to say, according to Hicks, that the CBS office of standards and practices felt that some of the material was unsuitable for broadcast.

"Ah, which material exactly did they find . . ."

"Well, almost all of it."

"Bob, they're so obviously jokes."

Hicks protested that he had run his routine by his sixty-three-year-old mother in Little Rock, Arkansas, and it passed the test. Morton insisted that the situation was out of his hands. He offered to set up another appearance and, according to Hicks, shouldered the blame for not having spent more time beforehand editing out the "hot points."

"Bob, they're just jokes. I don't want to be edited by you or anyone else. Why are people so afraid of jokes?"

"Bill, you've got to understand our audience."

"Your audience! Your audience is comprised of people, right? Well, I understand people, being one myself. People are who I play to every night, Bob. We get along just fine. We taped the show at five-thirty in the afternoon, and your audience had no problem with the material then. Does your audience become overly sensitive between the hours of 11:30 P.M. and 12:30 A.M.? And by the way, Bob, when I'm not performing on your show, *I'm* a member of the audience of your show. Are you saying my material is not suitable for me? This doesn't make any sense. Why do you underestimate the intelligence of your audience?"

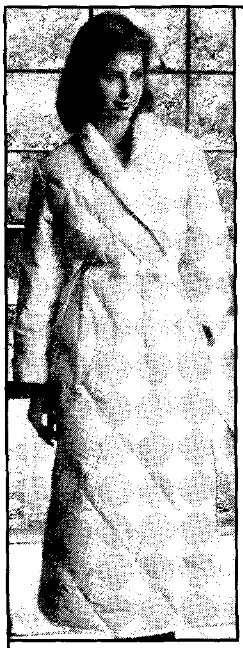
"Bill, it's not our decision."

Morton apologized to Hicks, explaining that the show had to answer to the network, and said that he'd reschedule him soon. The conversation ended soon after that exchange, and in the intervening weeks Hicks has had no further word, he says, from Morton or Letterman. He has, however, heard indirectly from the CBS standards-and-practices office. A man who heard an interview with Hicks on the radio and was outraged over the censorship wrote to CBS to upbraid the network for not airing Hicks' set. He faxed the reply from CBS standards-and-practices to the radio station, which faxed it to Hicks' office. "It is true that Bill Hicks was taped that evening and that his performance did not air," the letter said. "What is inaccurate is that the deletion of his routine was required by CBS. In fact, although a CBS Program Practices editor works on that show, the decision was solely that of the producers of the program who decided to substitute his performance with that of another comedian. Therefore, your criticism that CBS censored the program is totally without foundation. Creative judgments must be made in the course of producing and airing any program and, while we regret that you disagreed with this one, the producers felt it necessary and that is not a decision we would override."

Hicks, who refers to the television set as Lucifer's Dream Box, is now in Lucifer's Limbo. He can't get the Letterman show to send him a tape of his performance. He can't get to the bottom of who censored him. And, as yet, he has no return date on Letterman. I called Robert Morton two weeks ago, and, when pressed, he finally grasped the nettle. He had begun by saying that the decision not to show Hicks' routine was made jointly by the Letterman show and CBS and ended up telling me that the producers of the show were solely responsible. "Ultimately, it was our decision," he said. "We're the packagers and owners of the program. It's our job to deliver a finished product to the network."

"It's been a strange little adventure for Willy," Hicks told me at the Dominion last year, referring to his American comedy career. And so it has proved—stranger, in fact, than Hicks' most maverick imaginings. The farce came full circle in the week following the Letterman debacle. A friend called Hicks to tell him about a commercial she'd seen during the Letterman show—a pro-life commercial. "The networks are delivering an audience to the advertisers," Hicks said later. "They showed their hand. They'll continue to pretend they're a hip talk show. And I'll continue to be me. As Bob Dylan said, the only way to live outside the law is to be totally honest. So I will remain lawless."

OUTLAW is how Hicks was styling himself last year for the Dominion performance as he put on his black rifleman's coat and Stetson in the dress-



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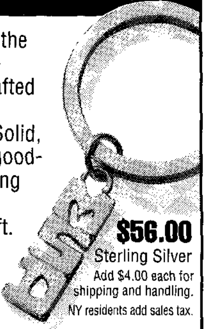

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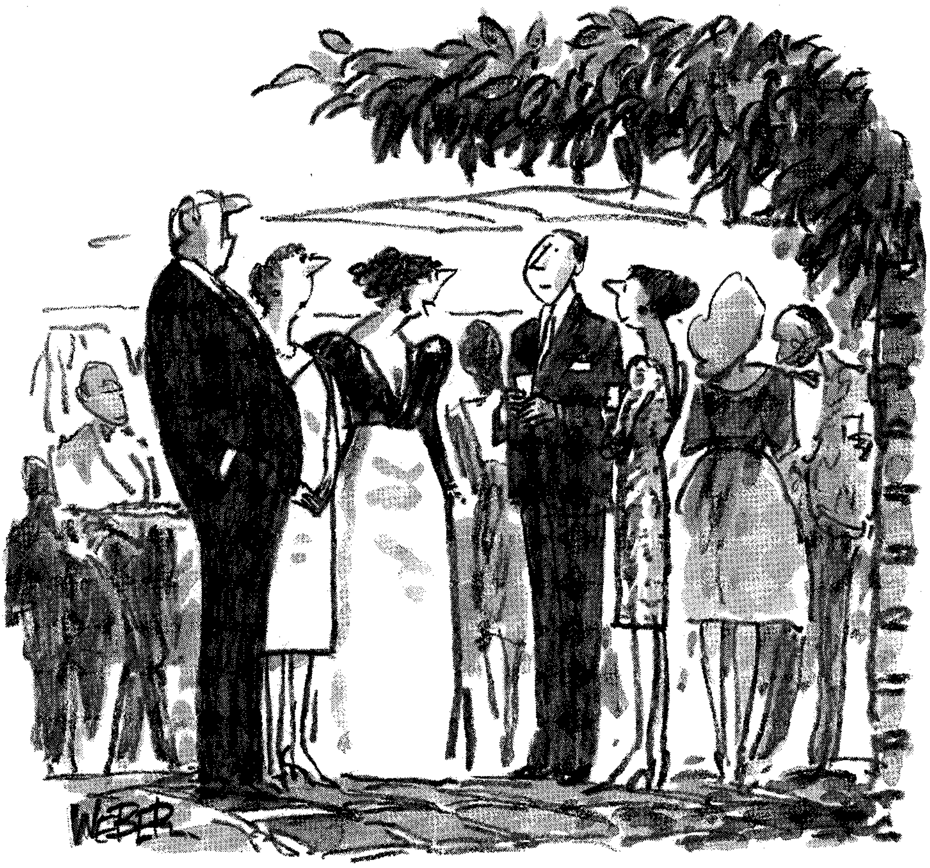
ing room. When the curtain came up on his performance, Hicks was revealed in his hat, long coat, and cowboy boots, while behind him huge orange flames licked the air. Images of heat and hunting are the perfect backdrop to Hicks' kind of comic attack. He was a hostile sharpshooter taking aim at the culture's received opinions and trying to shoot them down. The British, who have an appetite for this kind of intellectual anarchy, embraced Hicks with a rare and real enthusiasm from the moment he stumbled onto the vivacious English comedy scene in November, 1990, as one of eighteen comedians in "Stand Up America!," a six-week limited engagement in the West End. The next year, Hicks was at the Edinburgh Festival, where he outclassed the native talent and won the Critics' Award. This led to his 1992 "Dangerous Tour" of Britain and Ireland, which culminated in appearances in the West End, at the Queen's Theatre, that May. The response was overwhelming, and now Hicks was doing one of the final performances of the "Relentless Tour," his second lap of honor around the British Isles in one year. Hicks was at home with the English, whose sense of irony made them more receptive to his combative humor than the credulous American public had been. "There's a greater respect for the performer," he said. "If you're onstage, people think you've earned it. In America—I'm not kidding—people bark their approval." I looked at him dubiously. "Ask around," Hicks said, and he simulated the sound. "They bark like animals. It's frightening. It's what American society has reduced people to. Ironically, in this show I call myself Goat Boy. They shouldn't be barking, they should be *baaing.*"

My first encounter with Hicks was his Gulf War routine, which had been broadcast during the postwar euphoria at the beginning of 1992 on England's Channel 4. My sixteen-year-old son, Chris, was bellowing from the living room for me to come quickly. It was midnight, and he was sprawled, laughing, on the sofa, watching Hicks at the Montreal Comedy Festival calling a massacre a massacre. "So scary, watching the news. How they built it all out of proportion.



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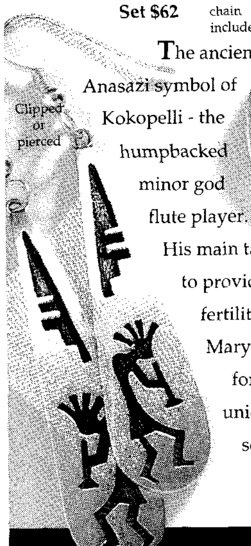

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Like Iraq was ever, or could ever, under any stretch of the imagination, be any threat to us *whatsoever*. But, watching the news, you never would have got that idea. Remember how it started? They kept talking about 'the élite Republican Guard' in these hushed tones, like these guys were the bogeyman or something. 'Yeah, we're doing well now, but we have yet to face . . . the élite Republican Guard.' Like these guys were twelve-feet-tall desert warriors—'NEVER LOST A BATTLE. WE SHIT BULLETS.' Well, after two months of continuous carpet bombing and not *one* reaction at all from them, they became simply 'the Republican Guard'—not nearly as élite as we may have led you to believe. And after another month of bombing they went from 'the élite Republican Guard' to 'the Republican Guard' to 'the Republicans made this shit up about there being guards out there.'

"People said, 'Uh, uh, Bill, Iraq had the fourth-largest Army in the world.' Yeah, maybe, but you know what? After the first three largest armies, there's a *real* big fuckin' drop-off. The Hare Krishnas are the fifth-largest army in the world. And they've already got our airports."

Most TV comics trade in brand-name jokes or jokes that play off physical stereotypes. They don't question their culture so much as pander to its insatiable hunger for distraction. But Hicks' mischievous flights of fantasy bring the audience back to reality with a thump. Hicks is a kind of ventriloquist of his contradictory nature, letting voices and sound effects act out both his angst and his appetites. Occasionally, the instinct for Goat Boy comes over him, and Hicks, a man of instincts, goes with it. Goat Boy is Pan, or Hicks' version of him—a randy goat "with a placid look in his eyes, completely at peace with nature"—through which he celebrates his own rampaging libido.

"I am Goat Boy," he would say in the act that night, in a grave baritone. "Come here, my little fruit basket."

"What do you want, Goat Boy?" he answered, in a coy Southern falsetto. "You big old shaggy thing."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha," Hicks growled into the microphone. "I am here to please you."

"How?"

"Tie me to your headboard. Throw your legs over my shoulders, let me roll

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you like a feed bag." Hicks brought the microphone close to his mouth. He snorted, slurped, and finally screamed, "Hold on to my horns!" Then, as suddenly as the impulse had come upon him, Hicks broke off the fantasy, saying, "I need professional help at this point."

THE secret of Hicks' psychic survival has always been comedy. He started writing and performing his jokes as an alienated thirteen-year-old in Houston in 1975, and, by his own count, for the last five years he has been performing about two hundred and sixty-five days a year, sometimes doing as many as three two-hour gigs a night. Few contemporary comics or actors have such an opportunity to get their education in public. Hicks uses the stage time to write his material in front of an audience. "I do it all onstage, *all* of it," he said, and then began to relate how he'd started on his eccentric journey. "When I was about eleven, it dawned on me that I didn't like where I was," he said, speaking of the subdivision where he lived, which was called Nottingham Forest; of Stratford High School, which looked like a prison and where he was bored out of his skull for four years; and of his father, who was a midrange executive with General Motors. The Hicks family lived in "strict Southern Baptist ozone." The memory still rankled. "One time a friend of mine—we were nine—runs over and goes, 'Bill, I just saw some hippies down at the store.' I go, 'No way.' He goes, 'I swear.' My dad goes, 'Get off this property! We don't swear on this property!'

"We were living the American dream. This was the best life had to offer. But there was no life, and no creativity. My dad, for instance, plays the piano. The same song for thirty years—I think it's 'Kitten on the Keys.' I don't play the piano, but all my friends are musicians. My dad goes, 'Do they read music?' I go, 'No.' 'Well, how do they play it?' I go to the piano and I write a song. What's the difference? He can't improvise. That, to me, is the suburbs. You get to a point, and that's it—it's over."

ONCE he'd seized on the idea of writing jokes, Hicks closeted himself in his bedroom and went to school on comedians. He started watching Johnny Carson. "I thought he was the only comic in the world, because I never stayed up later," he said. Soon Hicks began burning the midnight oil, taping other comic acts on television. "I'd take their jokes and also write my own. I performed them around school, and what I loved was when both got equal laughs. I knew which one was me and which one I'd seen on TV the night before. I learned how to mesh these things. How to get into character. I was very, very popular and known as a comedian at school. I'd always have to have material, constantly, all day. It got to the point where my English teacher gave me five minutes to do before class. My older brother Steve encouraged me. I typed up about two pages of jokes—whimsical stuff in the Woody Allen vein, which really appealed to me—and slipped them under his door. He came in later that night and said, 'What's this?' I said, 'I dunno. I'm writing these things. They're jokes.' He couldn't believe it. 'These are funny, man. Keep doing this.' "

Hicks' first partner in comedy was Dwight Slade, with whom he formed the act Bill and Dwight in the eighth grade. A tape exists of Hicks and Slade giggling through some of their early routines, which involved pretending to be brothers with "many, many problems." "Ladies and gentlemen, the comedy sensation Dwight Slade and Bill Hicks. And here they are!" it begins, and then the two of them collapse into roars of amusement at their own vain attempts to strike adult postures while reading gags about God, sex, abortion, and parents.

The jokes illustrated Hicks' precocity, and suggested how comedy both masked and admitted the hostility that kept him sullen and virtually silent around his family. "I can remember being at dinner when Bill would come down to eat," Steve Hicks told me. "He'd sit there with his face buried in a book. Absolutely no conversation from him or to him. Nothing. Then he would go up to his room and close and lock the door. We had no idea what he was doing." Hicks' room, which had nothing on the walls but a guitar, was a cell of rebellious solitude. He kept a typewriter under his bed and hid his pages of jokes inside its case.

In 1976, there were no comedy clubs in Houston. Except for school, the only outlets for Bill and Dwight's routines were talent shows and night clubs. They scoured the paper for auditions, and often rode their bikes the seventeen miles into town and back for a tryout. That sum-

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mer, when they were both fourteen, a talent agent to whom they'd sent a tape liked it enough to get them airtime on Jerry Lewis's Telethon from 2 to 2:45 A.M. Their big break posed three immediate problems: (1) they didn't have forty-five minutes of material, (2) they'd never performed as Bill and Dwight in front of a live audience, and (3) they had to tell their parents. The first two problems were surmountable, but the third proved the sticking point. Hicks' parents said no. Hicks and Slade had to cancel, explaining that they were too young to drive themselves to the job. But in 1978, when the Comedy Workshop opened on San Felipe, in Houston, they talked their way into the lineup. This time, they made the gig. To get to it, Hicks had to climb out his window, shin down the drainpipe to the garage roof, jump from the roof to the ground, and hightail it to the Catholic church behind his house, where Kevin Booth, a friend who had a car, picked him up and then drove both performers to the club. Bill and Dwight did fifteen minutes—a kind of double solo performance, each doing Woody Allen shtick without the actual give-and-take of a comedy team. "What was really funny was when my friends would come and I'd go, 'I . . . uh . . . I have trouble . . . trouble with women,' " Hicks said. "And my friends would go, 'No, you don't!' I'd go, 'My parents are very poor.' 'No, they're not!' They were amazed we were in this adult world. They were seventeen and could drive us there, but when they got us there we were in the adult world."

The comedy team performed five times before Slade moved to Portland, Oregon, where he still lives, working as a standup comic. Hicks put his anarchic energy into a hapless punk-rock group called Stress, in which he sang a song called "I'm Glad I'm Not a Hubcap (Hubcaps Don't Get Laid)." At some point in his seventeenth year, Hicks' parents took him to a psychotherapist. "There was no connection between me and my parents—none," he said. "They had no idea of who I was. They still don't get what I do. How could they have understood it fifteen years ago?" The therapist met with the family, then with Hicks. At the end of the session, the therapist took Hicks aside. "Listen, you can continue to come if you feel like it," Hicks recalled him saying. "But it's them, not you." Soon afterward, at the begin-

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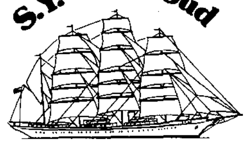

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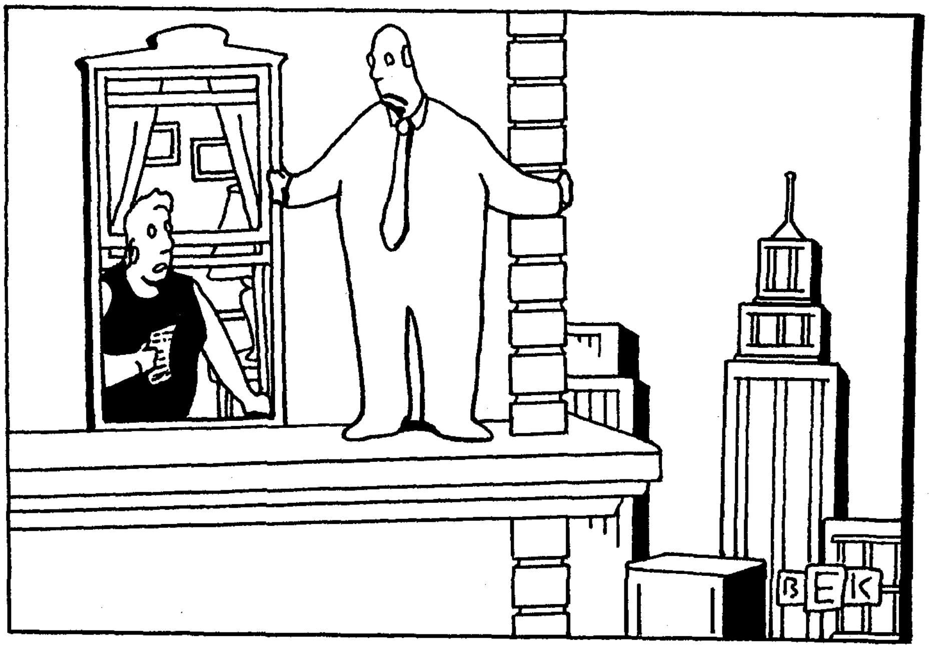

"Will you be going by the market?"

• •

ning of Hicks' senior year, his father was transferred to Little Rock, Arkansas. He and his wife left Hicks behind in the house and left him the keys to the car. Hicks began doing comedy every night. His parents thought he was studying. The comedy club put him on first, because he had to get home early. Sometimes the phone would be ringing just as he walked in the door. "The conversations were like this," Hicks said. He fell easily into his father's Southern accent: " 'Where were you?' 'Library.' 'Again?' " Even after his parents left, his material was almost entirely about them.

To this day, Hicks continues to mythologize his parents and his relationship with them, in comic routines that spoof their Southern propriety. But this is only professional acrimony, and doesn't stop Hicks from thanking his parents on his record albums or turning up regularly for ritual family occasions. Hicks, like all comedians, picks at ancient wounds to keep open the soreness that feeds his laughter and to demonstrate his mastery over the past.

In 1982, Hicks' parents finally saw him perform. They had been visiting Steve in Dallas, where the family had assembled for Thanksgiving, and his parents decided to surprise him. The plan was to drive the three hours to Austin, see the show, and drive back to Dallas the same night before setting out the next day for the six-hour ride to Little Rock. Steve and his wife waited up for them but finally fell asleep around 3 A.M. At nine, their phone rang. The Hickses had been so appalled by their son's act that they'd got in their car and driven non-stop to Little Rock. "They were in a state of shock," Steve says. "They didn't say a word to each other for nine hours. They didn't even realize they'd driven through Dallas!"

At one end of Hicks' long, corridor-like dressing room at the Dominion was a window overlooking the stage. Hicks walked over and looked out at the paying customers. "It's about that time," he said. Isolation suddenly fell over him like some fog blown in by his unconscious. Showtime was approaching, and he wanted to be alone. Fifteen minutes later, he brought his aggression roaring onstage. The narrative swung into attack as Hicks, like a man driven to distraction by the media, fought his way free of its overload by momentarily becoming its exaggerated voice: "Go back to bed! America is in control again. . . . Here . . . here is American Gladiators. Watch this! Shut up. Go back to bed. Here's fifty-six channels of it. Watch these pituitary retards bang their fuckin' skulls together and congratulate yourself on living in the land of freedom. Here you go, America! You are free to do as we tell you! You are free!"

Hicks worked at a tremendous rate, pounding away at the absurdities of American culture with short jabs of wit and following up with a flurry of counterpunches. "Ever notice how people who believe in creationism look really unevolved?" he said. "Their eyes real close together. Eyebrow ridges. Big, furry hands and feet. 'I believe God created me in one day.' Looks like he rushed it." Later, near the end of the evening, Hicks drew one final lesson. "The world is like a ride at an amusement park," he said. "And when you choose to go on it, you think that it's real. Because that's how powerful our minds are." A young Englishman three seats away from me shouted "Bollocks!" And, without missing a beat, completely caught up in the dialogue he was having with his audience, Hicks said, "There is a lot of denial in this ride. The ride, in fact, is made up of denial. All things work in Goat Boy's favor!" Thrilled by the improvised insight, the audience burst into applause, and then Hicks guided the rest of the show smoothly to its conclusion, which, for all its combativeness, ended on the word "peace."

HICKS came to my house the next day for tea. He was tired and a little distracted, and was wondering out loud which way to take his quirky talent. "Once this stuff is done, it's over with—I'm not married to any of it," he said. "Goat Boy is the only thing that really intrigues me right now. He's not Satan. He's not Evil. He's Nature." Hicks paused and added, "I'm trying to come up with this thing about 'Conversations with Goat Boy.' " Then, suddenly, the interrogator and Goat Boy started a conversation at my tea table:

"You don't like America?"

"I don't *see* America. To me, there is just a rapidly decreasing wilderness."

Hicks stopped and smiled. "That is Goat Boy. There is no America. It's just a big pavement now to him. That's the whole point. What is America anyway—a landmass including the Philippines? There are so many different Americas. To him, to Nature, it's just land, the earth. Indian spirit—Indians would understand randy Pan, the Goat Boy. They'd probably have a mask and a celebration."

My son wandered into the kitchen and lingered to eavesdrop on the conversation. At one point, he broke in. "I don't know how you have the courage to say those things," he said. "I could never talk like that in front of people."

Hicks smiled but had no response. Saying the unsayable was just his job. He analyzed the previous night's performance, which had been filmed for an HBO special. (It was broadcast in September to good reviews.) "People watch TV *not* to think," he said. "I'd like the opportunity to stir things up once, and see what happens. But I've got a question. Do I even want to be part of it anymore? Show business or art—these are choices. It's hard to get a grip on me. It's also hard for me to have a career, because there's no archetype for what I do. I have to create it, or uncover it." To that end, he said, he and Fallon Woodland, a standup from Kansas City, were writing "The Counts of the Netherworld," a TV comedy commissioned for England's Channel 4 and set in the collective unconscious of mankind. Hicks was doing a column for the English satire magazine *Scallywag*. He was planning a comedy album, called "Arizona Bay," a narrative rant against California with his own guitar accompaniment. Should he stay in England, where he was already a cult figure, or return to America? He recounted a joke on the subject by his friend Barry Crimmins, another American political comedian. " 'Hey, buddy,' this guy says to him after a show. 'America—love it or leave it!' And Crimmins goes, 'What? And be a victim of our foreign policy?' "

As Hicks was about to go, he said, "We are facilitators of our creative evolution. We can ignite our brains with light." The line brought back something his high-school friend Kevin Booth had told me: "Bill was the first person I ever met whose goal was to become enlightened." At various times in his life, Hicks had meditated, studied Hindu texts, gobbled hallucinogens, searched for U.F.O.s—anything to make some larger spiritual and intellectual connection. His comedy takes an audience on a journey to places in the heart where it can't or won't go without him. Through laughter, Hicks makes unacceptable ideas irresistible. He is particularly lethal because he persuades not with reason but with joy. "I believe everyone has this fuckin' poem in his heart," he said on his way out. ♦

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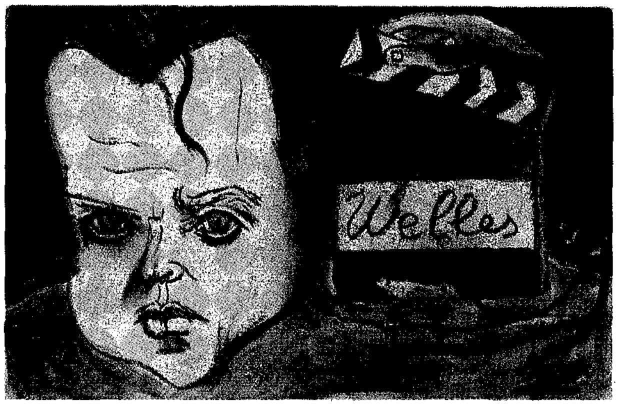
THE CURRENT CINEMA

GOING SOUTH

BY ANTHONY LANE

"IT'S ALL TRUE" is the title of an Orson Welles film that was started but never completed. Now unearthed and fleshed out with documentary, it is being shown for the first time. The result is a peculiar hybrid of travelogue and treachery, fable and dance, all jostling for attention, none quite gaining the upper hand: in short, an Orson Welles movie. He directs a mere fraction of it, and appears only fitfully onscreen, yet the spirit of the man, puckish but expansive, hovers above the whole enterprise. It was ever thus: with a handful of late scenes, and with no attempt to wrest control from Carol Reed, he somehow turned "The Third Man" into a Welles production, just as all Vienna fell under the spell of Harry Lime. Welles liked to slip a dose of his own wit into every picture he touched, as though it were being filmed through his eyes. Eight years after his death, the effect has not worn off; on the evidence of "It's All True," it is more potent than ever.



"It's All True" features the long-lost Latin-American footage that derailed Orson Welles' career.

The story is a tangled and unhappy one. In 1942, Welles was pulled off the final stages of "The Magnificent Ambersons" and sent flying down to Rio. His task was to foster good relations with Brazil, as part of a State Department drive to win Latin-American support in the face of war. Welles was to be cultural ambassador and professional charmer—to work his magic on the Brazilians as he had already done on the American public. The movie calls it "a gesture of hemispheric solidarity," which sounds like a description of Welles' dramatic technique in later life. He was slated to make a three-part film for R.K.O.; the studio was worried about dropping money on the picture, but the United States government guaranteed up to three hundred thousand dollars against any losses. In retrospect, the mission seems more like a gamble: America was funding its young genius in his patriotic duty—to go south and have a good time. Things could only go wrong.

And so they did, in spectacular fashion. The fallout was so widespread that it has taken years to piece together what happened. In 1985, Bill Krohn, the Hollywood correspondent for *Cahiers du Cinéma,* announced that parts of "It's All True"—missing, presumed lost—had been found in studio archives. There was footage from all three sections of the movie: from "The Story of Samba," a hymn to the Rio carnival, some of it shot in Technicolor; from "My Friend Bonito," the tale of a boy and a bull, overseen by Welles but directed by his colleague Norman Foster; and from "Four Men on a Raft," the reënactment of a celebrated voyage to Rio. Krohn collaborated with Richard Wilson, an old friend of Welles' who had worked on the movie in Brazil; together with Myron Meisel, they assembled the film we see now.

You can only admire the inspired patience of the reconstruction—half sleuthing, half archeology—and the tracking down and interviewing of those connected with the original shoot. On the other hand, a movie audience is impatient of scholarship; it will swallow any number of tall tales, but small, hard

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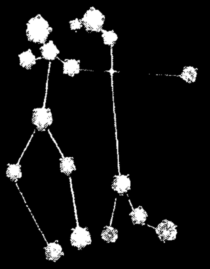

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facts tend to lodge in its craw. No one knew this better than Welles himself, and as "It's All True" gets under way you realize how absurd the title is. With Orson Welles, it's *never* all true. Everything about him, from movies to monologues to magic shows, lends weight to the principle that you cannot look truth straight in the face, and even if you could it wouldn't be worth trusting; it's like Rita Hayworth among the mirrors, just one of a thousand reflections. There is nothing more sly or joyous in "It's All True" than the opening scene: Welles talking to the camera, explaining his version of the prickly events that surrounded the film. He shows a crude drawing: "This is a voodoo witch doctor. I ran into him down in Brazil."

Here is the eager, restive, oddly casual tone that you find in one of Conrad's yarn spinners, and—quite unfairly—it shames the rest of the documentary, turning its precision into pedantry. The voice alone is enough to draw you on: Where else can you hear the sombre measures of a funeral sermon mixed with the burr of consummate bullshit? Cinema has given us a choir of heavenly growlers, from Jimmy Stewart right down to Lauren Bacall, but there is a select group—Welles, Ralph Richardson, and the John Huston of "Chinatown"—that knows that the richness itself is very nearly a joke, that anything can be achieved, anyone gulled, by such a ridiculous sound. Welles rubs his lines against us like cat's fur: the roguish closing credits of "Ambersons," for example ("I wrote the script and directed it. My name is Orson Welles"), or Kane softly hamming his way into sincerity as he recites his declaration of principles. When the voice-over of "It's All True" is given to somebody else, it begins to sound like any other documentary: "The plans were about to change—dramatically." After Welles, everything always seems a little flat.

Nowhere do you miss him more than in "Four Men on a Raft." This was the heart of "It's All True," and with Welles as narrator its air of downbeat grandeur would have been complete; as things stand, we have to make do with newly recorded sound effects (slap of waves, thock of axe on wood), and a rather strenuous score by Jorge Arriagada. Welles based his story on the recent triumph of four *jangadeiros*, Brazilian fishermen who labored under a harsh system with no form

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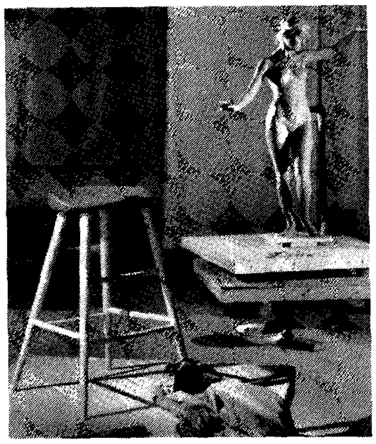

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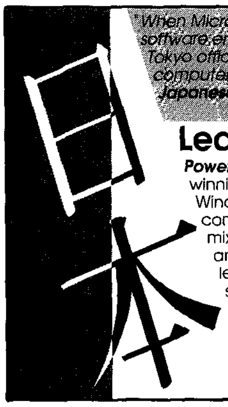

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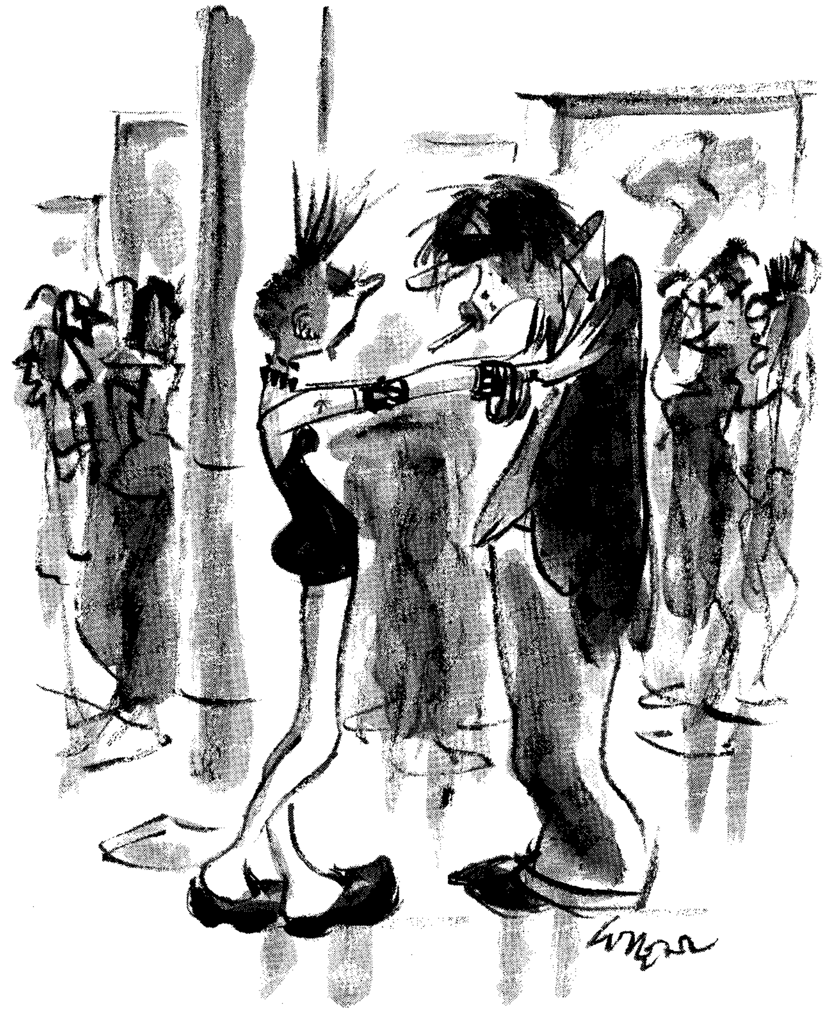
of redress: they sailed sixteen hundred and fifty miles along the coast to plead their case before the President. The plot is pared to elementals: a marriage, a death, and then the journey itself. Welles had precious little film to work with, and the result has an uncanny speed and concentration, as if he were trying to honor the sparseness of the men's lives with his own style; the wistful ease of "Ambersons" seems a world away. There are moments in "Four Men on a Raft" that calmly beat Eisenstein at his own game: the funeral procession, for instance, where the camera cuts from the snaking line of mourners to the trudge of their feet, and from there to the grim poise of their expressions, as if tracing the source of their dignity.

Here is Welles at his least lordly and most inventive—making the best of a cheap job, learning and storing new tricks along the way. The closeup that becomes a daunting icon, bodies honestly flattered by the clean coastal light: without these images from Brazil, would Welles have dreamed of the randy, sweltering scenes on board ship in "The Lady from Shanghai"? Without "Four Men on a Raft," without its abstract arrangements of wood and canvas, its complex pattern of shadows thrown by a simple net, would he have arrived so neatly at the murders of Desdemona and Roderigo in "Othello"—one masked tight by a sheet, the other stabbed through the slats of a Turkish bath? All these movies delve into a ravishing range of monochrome tones; I like to think that Welles saw the Technicolor rushes from "The Story of Samba," realized that color could never hope to match the expressive timbre of black-and-white, and thus stayed away from it for more than twenty-five years.

Let's not kid ourselves, however: "It's All True" is not, and would never have been, a major picture. It has an innocence about it, a trusting breeziness that charms the eye; if Welles had been operating at full throttle, he would have laced



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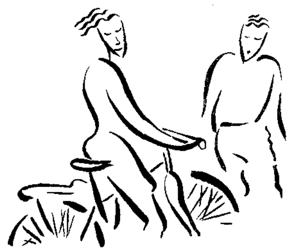

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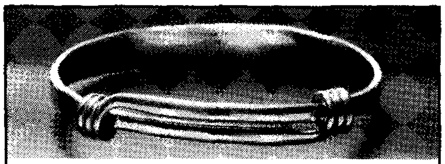

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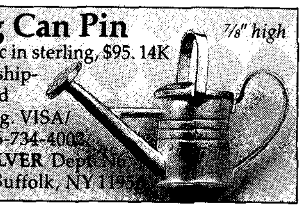

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it with corruption, with a touch of evil. But that was not his job; he was there in the interests of America, not of Orson Welles, although back at R.K.O. the studio heads were beginning to wonder if he knew the difference. When they saw what he had shot, they panicked and tried to pull him off the project; he persevered, and they fired him. Just for good measure, "Ambersons" was hacked up and released in a version that bore little resemblance to his original plan. Even as one greets the long-awaited appearance of "It's All True," there is a feeling that we are watching the prologue to a tragedy. Welles called the whole episode "the one key disaster in my story," adding, "It cost me many, many other pictures which I never made; and many years in which I couldn't work at all."

That is certainly the received wisdom; for once, Welles is not having us on. But we must treasure what we have, not what we lack, and it seems to me that his existing films, most of them masterpieces, move gracefully under the burden of his wretched experience with "It's All True." Welles is unique among American directors, after all, in being a showman who is interested in failure. Movie history is stuffed with Barnums of every description, but not one—not even Fellini—has Welles' instinctive need to hang around and see the big top come down. If Griffith and De Mille believed in the power of spectacle, it took Welles to convince us that spectacle reveals its meaning, its full bloom, only at the moment when it rots and falls. That is why the figure of Falstaff swelled in his imagination, and why, in some bizarre way, we should be grateful for the farrago in Brazil. For the first time, the boy wonder heard the chimes at midnight, and from here on they would toll through his career, endlessly refining his romantic pessimism. His movies turn aside from happy endings not because he was a grouch—he virtually defined the *bon viveur*—but because he knew that the arc of human endeavor has to pass through happiness and out the other side. After "It's All True," he became the *jangadeiro* of cinema—close to the wind, almost on the rocks, forever in search of a good deal. In the heroic tale of the fishermen and the sad story of the movie director we hear the same refrain: Expect the worst, and hope for the best. If in doubt, do the samba. ♦

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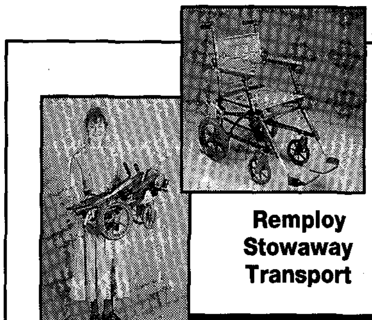
BY EDITH OLIVER

“MIXED EMOTIONS,” by Richard Baer, at the Golden, is about a man and a woman in their sixties, both recently widowed; he is a Jew and she is a Catholic. (Her husband, a Jew, was his closest friend, and his wife was hers.) All the action takes place during a single night while her apartment is being dismantled, as she prepares to leave town for Florida. He has come to ask her to marry him. He persuades, she resists, and it takes the audience at least ten minutes to realize that, for all her backing and forthing, she is just as eager as he is. The play is a jokey comedy in which the jokes are either geriatric or Jewish, or both (for example, the words “my accountant” become an automatic laugh), and sex is an underlying theme and recurring topic. At any rate, the man and the woman go to dinner (comments by him about expense), and they go to bed. The action is interrupted from time to time by a pair of moving men, packing up books and CDs, who give the production as a whole the rhythm of a gavotte.

The play is the sort of comedy that it is possible to see on television any day or night of the week. Why, then, should an audience pay to watch it? Because of the grace bestowed on it by the acting of Harold Gould and Katherine Helmond on a small stage in a small theatre, where they are free of the tyranny of, among other things, the camera, with its pesky closeups. Under Tony Giordano’s direction, Miss Helmond and Mr. Gould give performances of rare quality as they court each other. She is as pretty as ever, looking quietly humorous and not a day over forty, and he is forthright and rambunctious. The writing throughout is not bad, and a number of the jokes are funny, although the playwright has no instinct for the cutoff point of many of them. The best joke of all, of course, is the ever-moving moving men, portrayed by bulky, worldly Brian Smiar and skinny, wide-eyed Vinny Capone, as they take apart Neil Peter Jampolis’s handsome setting. The natty costumes were designed by David Murin.

BUT even good acting cannot redeem “The Twilight of the Golds,” by Jonathan Tolins, which opened last week at the Booth, and is about a pregnant woman who discovers not only that the child will be a boy but also that he will be homosexual, like her brother. The discovery is made by her husband, who is engaged in some kind of medical research, and reports on a procedure that can foretell the genetic and sexual orientation of a fetus. What plot there is deals with her decision whether or not to abort and with the effect of the news on her Jewish family. The story, though, is primarily about the brother, who functions as narrator and, presumably, as dramatist’s proxy. He has worked as a designer at the Metropolitan Opera and sees an analogy (not immediately apparent to the rest of us) between the family’s predicament and that of the Wagnerian gods—hence the title and hence all those gems from “The Ring of the Nibelung.”

The first act panders shamelessly to the Jewish members of the audience (more mechanical laughter); the second act—in which the brother tries in vain to persuade the sister not to have an abortion, and in which the abortion is then botched, with disastrous results—is a spurt of vindictiveness. That having been said, it must also be said that Mr. Tolins can be funny when he isn’t trying too hard, and has some dramatic talent. The performance, under Arvin Brown’s direction, is pretty good, and in the role of the brother, too easily wounded and too quick to wound, Raphael Sbarge has a sharp, puckish authority. The other actors, not necessarily in order of merit, are Judith Scarpone as the mother, Jennifer Grey as the pregnant sister, David Groh as the father, and Michael Spound as the brother-in-law. Setting by John Iacovelli, costumes by Jeanne Button, and lighting by Martin Aronstein. ♦



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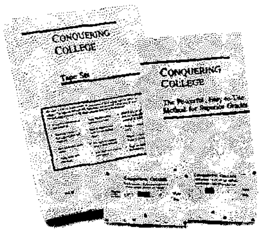

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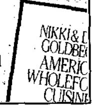
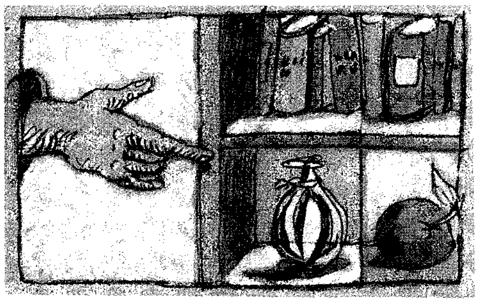


HONOR AMONG SCAVENGERS

BY CRAIG SELIGMAN

WHEN Lars Eighner's first essay appeared in the Winter, 1991, issue of *The Threepenny Review,* it looked like a fluke: a funny, bizarrely elegant piece of writing by a homeless gay pornographer which was simultaneously a manifesto of poverty, an erotic confession, and an account of a bum trip from Austin, where he and his dog, Lizbeth, had been living on next to nothing, to Tucson, where things hit bottom. But when *Threepenny* ran "On Dumpster Diving" the following fall, you could no longer dismiss him as a one-shot. In his second essay, Eighner offered a sophisticated and unself-conscious dilation—half reflective and half instructive—on the theme of surviving on refuse. Since then, the quality of his autobiographical essays has been consistent. A small cult has been waiting for the full narrative of his three years of homelessness (they're over now) to be published. It's out this month, under the same title as the original essay: "Travels with Lizbeth" (St. Martin's; $19.95).



Part of the fascination of reading Eighner comes from the cleavage between his stately, slightly fussbudget diction and the indignity of his circumstances: "Quite a number of people, not all of them of the bohemian type, are willing to brag that they found this or that piece in the trash. But eating from Dumpsters is what separates the dilettanti from the professionals." His style is irresistibly funny, in the way that the vaudeville tramp's white gloves and extended pinky are funny. I don't mean to suggest that he's putting on airs; Eighner doesn't insist on his dignity, because it never occurs to him that it might be missing. "I am a scavenger," he declares. "I think it a sound and honorable niche." "Sound" strikes a charmingly old-hat tone, but "honorable" is the eyebrow-raiser. Who thinks, amid the Realpolitik of the late twentieth century, in terms of honor? Not corporation officers, not Presidential advisers, and certainly not writers. Eighner the scavenger is the exception: even if he's reduced to eating garbage, some things are beneath him. He can be acid about the society he has slid to the bottom of, but to turn that cynicism inward would be doom. And so, by thinking well of himself, no matter what anybody else thinks, he breezes along. "I avoid trying to draw conclusions about the people who dump in the Dumpsters I frequent," he notes. "I think it would be unethical to do so, although I know many people will find the idea of scavenger ethics too funny for words." It *is* funny. But, because he doesn't harp on it, it's more than just funny. His triumph is that he never allows destitution to dehumanize him; he negotiates a jungle, but not as a beast.

Eighner is so recalcitrantly proud—some would say dotty—that even when his income dropped to zero he refused to panhandle. ("Begging was a desperate measure.") You can't help but admire his resourcefulness and his lack of self-pity. Though he complains about the tedium of scrounging, he is so interested in everything—from the movement of the planets, which sleeping under the open sky gave him the opportunity to watch, to the settlement of Texas, his native state—that it's hard to imagine him bored. Yet I couldn't shake the suspicion that part of the story wasn't getting told. When Eighner recounts resigning from a mental hospital where he had been given the job of caring for catatonic patients, something in his tone ("That was not the work I had been hired to do and I found it emetic") ex-

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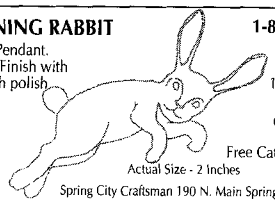
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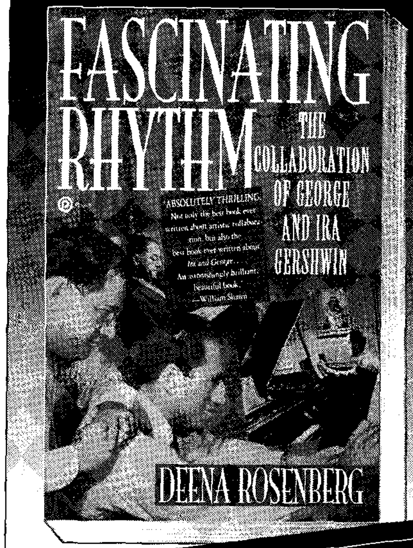
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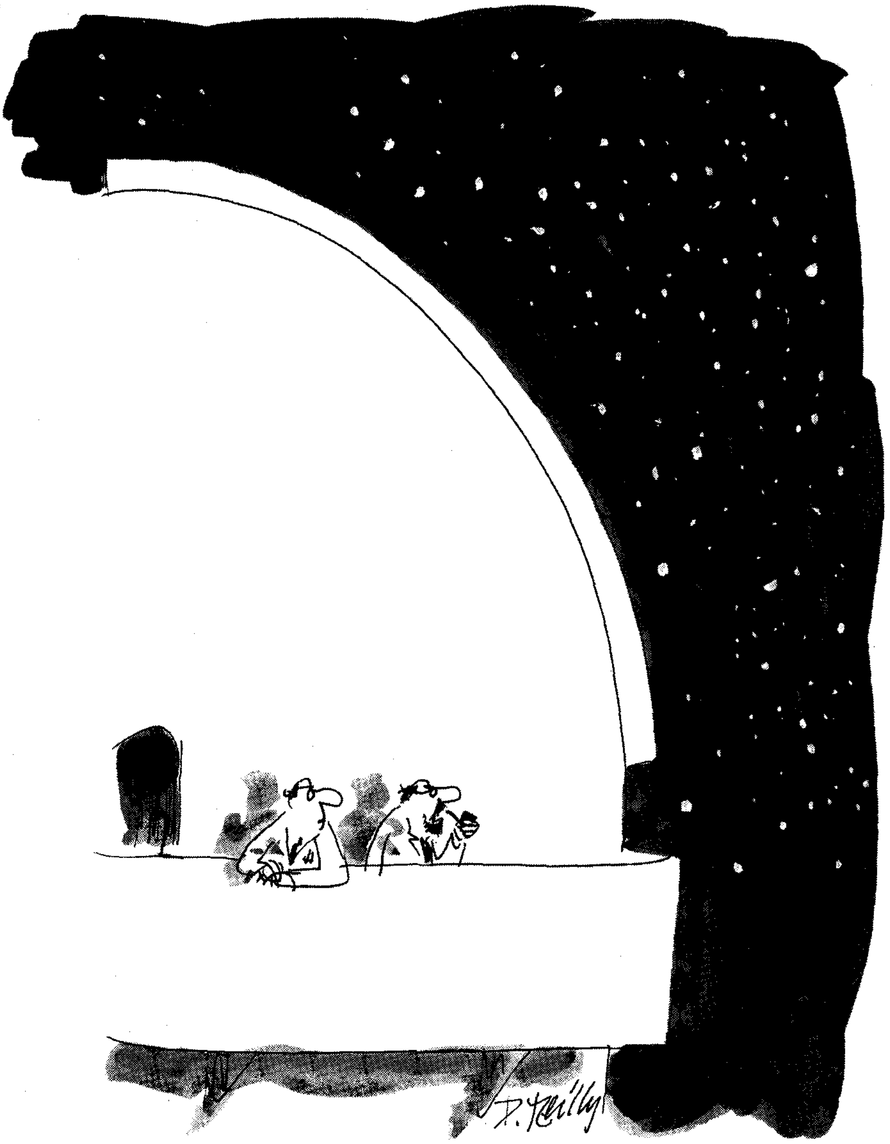

"My wife has grown fond of remarking, 'At retirement, they should name a black hole after you.'"

• •

plains why he hadn't been well liked there, and why he didn't have more luck elsewhere. Pride cuts both ways. On his own, he is cheerful and independent, but most encounters end on a sour note. That in itself may be part of the book's strange appeal: watching Eighner get his revenge on the people who have humbled him—doctors, cops, welfare bureaucrats, and the immorally indifferent employees of the Austin humane society, where Lizbeth was impounded for a while—is delicious. What's troubling is that the story is always about his victimization—and not just at the hands of authority figures. The lowlifes, con artists, alcoholics, and lunatics who make up Eighner's circle abuse him as consistently as everybody else. And as a group they don't bolster your confidence in his reliability.

But Lizbeth does. The dog (a Lab mix, apparently) made hitchhiking a trial, and she was a deterrent to anyone who might offer shelter; she was barky, laxly trained, and, according to her master, not too bright—though I suspect that he's selling her short to avoid sentimentality. Actually, she comes across as a model of alertness and cunning. She chased thieves away from Eighner's gear, and, without any coaching, she perfected a pathetic come-on—"a wan look, a few feeble twitches of the tail, a languid, tentative lick"—that had strangers pressing donations on her owner so urgently that he had to revise his financial policy and accept unrequested handouts. More significantly, Lizbeth gave Eighner's wanderings some vital structure. "In a life that seems utterly without meaning and purpose," he reflects in a discussion of winos, "the quest for the daily dose is something to do, is a reason to keep putting one foot in front of the other." Lizbeth was *his* daily dose: he could be cavalier about his own next meal, but she expected to be fed.

Eighner doesn't celebrate his devotion, but he doesn't conceal it, either. He aims for an honest, warts-and-all self-portrait; the whiff of self-justification, standard enough in autobiography, never becomes a strong odor. But his simplicity sometimes disguises an appetite for melodrama. While "I am a scavenger" is an unadorned statement, it's also a theatrically lit one. So is "I am a homosexual pornographer"—a sentence that constituted a one-line, I-shall-blench-at-nothing paragraph in Eighner's first *Threepenny* essay. This sentence doesn't appear in the new volume, for the surprising reason that his essays have been bowdlerized; several fragments from the original pieces are missing from the book. An involved, funny hustling anecdote has been reduced to "I got a short ride late in the afternoon and made five dollars in the process." Even innocuous passages, like Eighner's jokey reference to his amethyst earring and his lavender-polished big toenail, have been deleted. The book needed cutting, Eighner's editor explained in a recent *Publishers Weekly* story, and he directed the author to reshape the manuscript by excising most of the gay material. Since the editor was Michael Denneny, who has been a hero in gay publishing for well over a decade, there can't be any doubt that his sole motive was to put the book into the hands of as many readers as possible. Only someone with a very clear conscience could have made that call; but I think it was a bad one. The Eighner of "Travels with Lizbeth" still engages in enough sex in parks and rest rooms to shock a prude (even a gay prude), but he isn't recognizable as the man who once wrote, "To understand me is to realize that sexual activity is to me what money or power or social esteem is to some other persons, the ulti-

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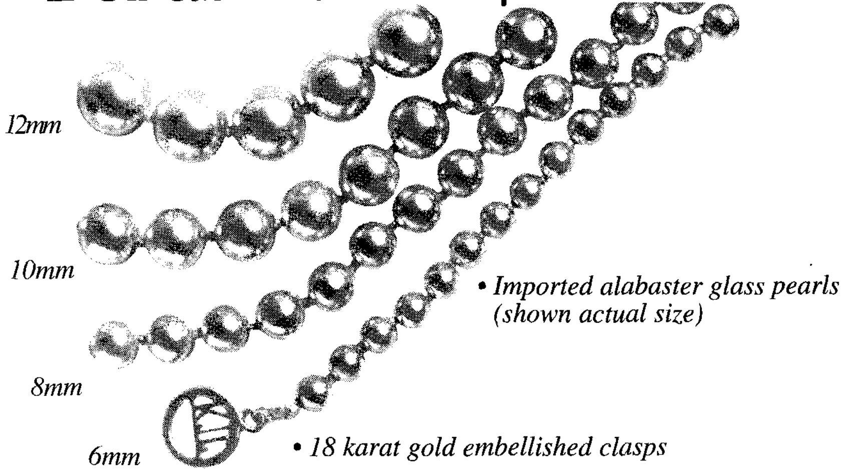
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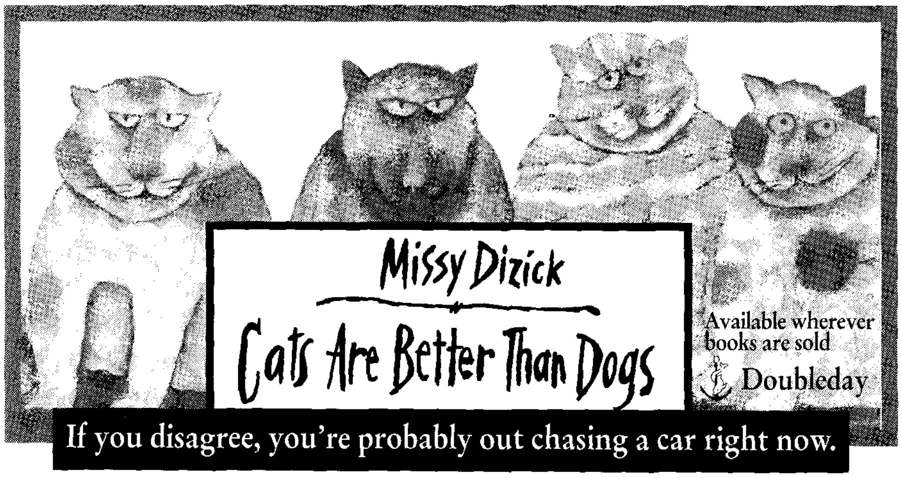
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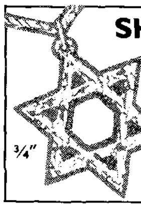

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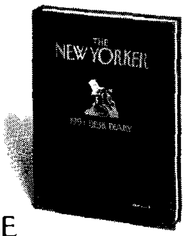

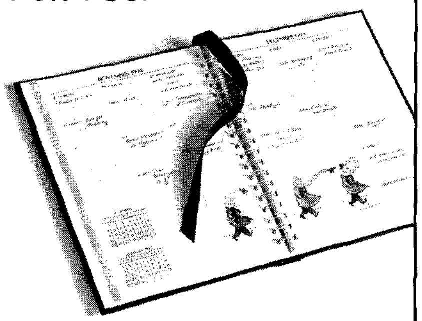

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mate goal, the *sine qua non,* the primary value." I don't really buy that statement—Eighner's interests are too wide-ranging for it to ring true—but the fact that *he* buys it provides one key to his bemusing personality, and it's a key that ought to be in the reader's hands.

"Although I often despaired of improving my material situation," Eighner remarks in the introduction to the book, "I seldom lacked for a feeling of self-worth or a sense of mission." That would be a noteworthy statement coming from anybody—most of the people I know lack both—but coming from a man on the lowest rung of the social ladder, it verges on phenomenal. In the original version, though, Eighner tied his self-esteem explicitly to his unlikely calling: "I believe in the worth of my work as a homosexual pornographer and I think of my mission as being to produce the best possible homosexual pornography." (Two paperback collections of his stories, "Bayou Boy" and "B.M.O.C.," both published by Badboy, are on the market now, and yes, he does *have a filthy mind.) My objection to the* excisions isn't so much that Eighner's sexuality is fascinating (though it certainly isn't dull) as that from the beginning his project has been to stand before us unvarnished and unfig-leafed, positive that if he puts his faith in the truth his readers will embrace him. And he's right: that confidence—in himself and in us—is what gives his voice its genial grace.

The narrative doesn't arc to a satisfying dénouement; it peters out on the final page. The writer and his dog, still destitute, if not altogether hopeless, find uncertain shelter with an old roommate. But any reader will know that a dramatic final chapter is missing, since the real conclusion is the volume in hand. And the story isn't over yet. The spectre of flukiness still haunts Eighner's writing. His porn is fine as porn—in fact, it's excellent, original porn. But that's all it is. The splendid style of "Travels with Lizbeth," on the other hand, has been inspired by a great, personal subject. Can he sustain the quality? The book may remain nothing more than a literary curiosity—a remarkable one. But if it reaches the audience it deserves, and if Eighner can continue to write at the same high level, it could launch a career. ♦

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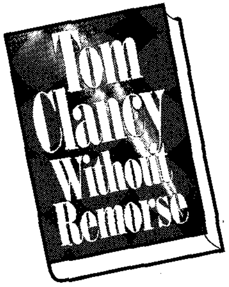

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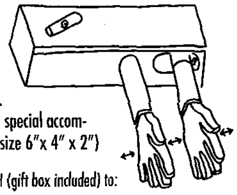

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BOOKS BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

Remembering Babylon

by David Malouf

(Pantheon; $20)

BRITISH settlers and Australian aboriginals are the cowboys and Indians of newfangled pioneer legends that attempt to tell both sides of the story. Gemmy Fairley seems "black" to the white nineteenth-century farmers into whose midst he wanders: he picked up alien ways during his adolescence, spent in the bush with the native community that rescued him from the sea. To the black people, however, he seems white. Being utterly outside any human tribe, he manages to discomfit not only the uneducated and bigoted among the settlers but also the well-meaning. Gemmy himself is abject but affectionate, a heartbreaking figure one wishes to know intimately. But there the book withholds satisfaction. The point of view shifts among many characters; one gets only glimpses of anyone's inner (or outer) life, so unresolved mysteries abound. Still, anything concerning the first characters we meet—Gemmy and two children who are his early champions—yields riches.

What Ownership's All About

by Karel Poláček; translated from the Czech by Peter Kussi

(Catbird Press; $21.95)

POLÁČEK, who is now remembered chiefly for his children's books, wrote this unsettling satire in 1928. It concerns a policeman, Jan Faktor, who saves up his money to build a very small apartment house in a seedy suburb of Prague. While the house is being constructed, he is merely a clownish hypocrite. Once he becomes a landlord, he turns gradually into a monster. His tenants are transformed, too: as his oppressions escalate, they lose self-confidence, initiative, and integrity. Poláček's treatment is expressionistic but never strident, and while Faktor and his cowed tenants become increasingly excessive, they somehow remain plausible. Their words often don't, though, in this translation; "wench," for example, is supposed to be "rough language." Kussi's introduction tells us that Poláček's characters are presented, hilariously, through their cliché-ridden abuse of language, and gives the impression that what we are about to read may resemble a Joe Orton play. It might, if you could read it in Czech.

GENERAL

Leni Riefenstahl: A Memoir

(St. Martin's; $35)

THE author holds an eminent place in the history of film and the history of women: she was a forerunner in the art of the cinema and one of its first women auteurs. Her other historic role, as one of Hitler's pets, caused her grief after the war, but, finding her movie career blocked, she made a new career, and found a new public, as a still photographer. At the age of ninety, Riefenstahl decided to set the record straight: this autobiography insists that she had nothing to do with Nazi atrocities and, indeed, had no interest in politics. One can believe her: on the evidence of her memoir, her self-absorption made other people all but invisible, and their doings of no interest except as they immediately concerned her or her work. Riefenstahl's discussions of moviemaking are interesting, but over the decades—and the pages—her obtuseness to everything but visual effects makes her a wearing companion.

The Fate of Africa: Trial by Fire

by Jeremy Harding

(Simon & Schuster; $25)

THE drama that unifies this otherwise sprawling account of six contemporary African wars is the now familiar one of Third World liberation movements' first becoming trapped by the Cold War's manipulations, and then being forced to deal with that conflict's abrupt dissolution. In Africa, as this book makes clear, such movements have also been weakened by internal strife and burdened by imported ideas of nationhood only haphazardly appropriate to their historical experience. But, while the author, a highly gifted, intrepid, and sympathetic journalist, is alert to historical background, he is more interested in effects than in causes, and most interested of all in the destiny of individual Africans living their lives in the middle of bloodshed and chaos. There is much war reportage here of the best kind—sharply observed and without illusions. And there are moments—in, for example, the description of a stylized, surreal face-off between Inkatha and A.N.C. supporters in Soweto (refereed by a less than impartial South African constabulary)—when the awesome dilemma of Africa is captured with all its resonances intact.

Tracings: A Book of Partial Portraits

by Paul Horgan

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $22)

FROM the pinnacle of his ninety years, an American literary master casts an eye back over his experiences with people he has loved, known, or only brushed elbows with. Among them are Feodor Chaliapin and Mary Garden, of the opera world; Frieda Lawrence, D. H. Lawrence's widow; Alice Roosevelt Longworth; T. S. Eliot; and Thornton Wilder. Somerset Maugham and Greta Garbo figure in slight but telling anecdotes. Horgan is able to bring every one of these people back to life, to convey to us their auras and quiddities, and the funny or sad or wonderful things about them. Two pieces stand out: a moving account of the last days of Igor Stravinsky, a man the author revered; and a robust portrait of Edmund Wilson, in which Horgan tells us, wryly but with affection, why a word like "amiable" would not be chosen to describe the general tenor of Wilson's social behavior. ♦

SHOUTS AND MURMURS

WEST SIDE STORY

BY THOMAS BELLER

On a sunny weekday afternoon, two men sprinted across Amsterdam Avenue, one in hot pursuit of the other. The man doing the chasing caught up with the one being chased, there was a tackle and an awkward groping, and then the pursuer had his prey in a headlock. The Joan of Arc Middle School had just let out across the street, and a crowd gathered right away. The man in the headlock, the captured man, was impossibly skinny, and wore a T-shirt, faded jeans that were too short, and sneakers. He had a beard and shaggy brown hair. Progressive librarian or mentally imbalanced junkie—it could have gone either way.

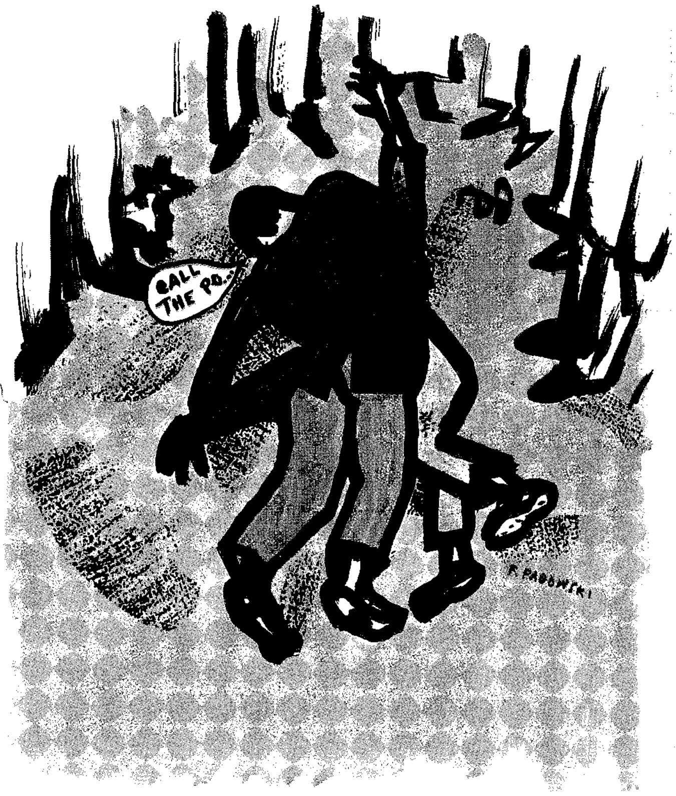
The one who had him in a headlock could have passed for a corporate executive. He wore a blue blazer, a bright striped tie, and gray slacks, but his shoes were incongruous—cheap jogging sneakers, the kind that fasten with a Velcro strap. For a moment the slate was empty, waiting to be filled with the truth—or, at least, information. Then the man in the blazer changed everything. "Bank robber!" he said.

The crowd pressed forward, and Blue Blazer dragged his quarry through a door and into the lobby of an apartment building just down the street. The doorman was not happy to see them. By now, the two men's cries had become a duet. One said, "Bank robber! Bank robber!" The other said, "My back! My back!"

The doorman said, "Jesus, man, not in the lobby!"

The two men fell to the floor in an awkward embrace; the skinny man's backpack skidded away, bulging ominously. The man in the blazer said, "Call the police!" His voice was tight and efficient. The skinny man looked as if he'd been run over by a truck. His eyes bulged, and he was panting. A small mob of middle-school students hovered at the edge of the lobby, a riot of backpacks, bizarre hair styles, and lips stained red with cherry candy.

A policeman hurried across Amsterdam Avenue, his hand on his pistol. Soon the lobby was filled with policemen and the building's residents. Explanations were made. Blue Blazer was a security guard at the Republic National Bank of New York at Ninety-fourth and Broadway, two blocks away. He'd stopped talking about a robbery, but mentioned a door and some broken glass. His English wasn't good, and he struggled to maintain calm as he spoke.



Then the skinny man spoke. Having arrived an instant after the bank closed, he said, he had got upset and kicked the glass door. It had cracked. The chase ensued. Asked why he ran two blocks at such speed, the skinny man said, "Because I'm programmed to run away from someone when they start running after me." He sounded less and less like a bank robber.

It was decided that everyone would walk the two blocks back to the bank to clear things up, but, before they left, a police officer posed a searching question. "How long have you been banking at this branch?" he asked.

Everything seemed to hang on the skinny man's answer. If he didn't bank there, perhaps he was a robber. If he did—well, who would rob his own bank?

The skinny man took several breaths. "I've banked there for years," he said. "Back since it was the Bankers Trust Company."

Everyone was silent for a moment. The evocation of a bank buyout carried with it a peculiar authority. This man hadn't even *wanted* to bank with the Republic National Bank of New York, and now he was being tackled on the street, to the cheers of a mob. From the sidelines someone called out, "Get a new bank!" ♦

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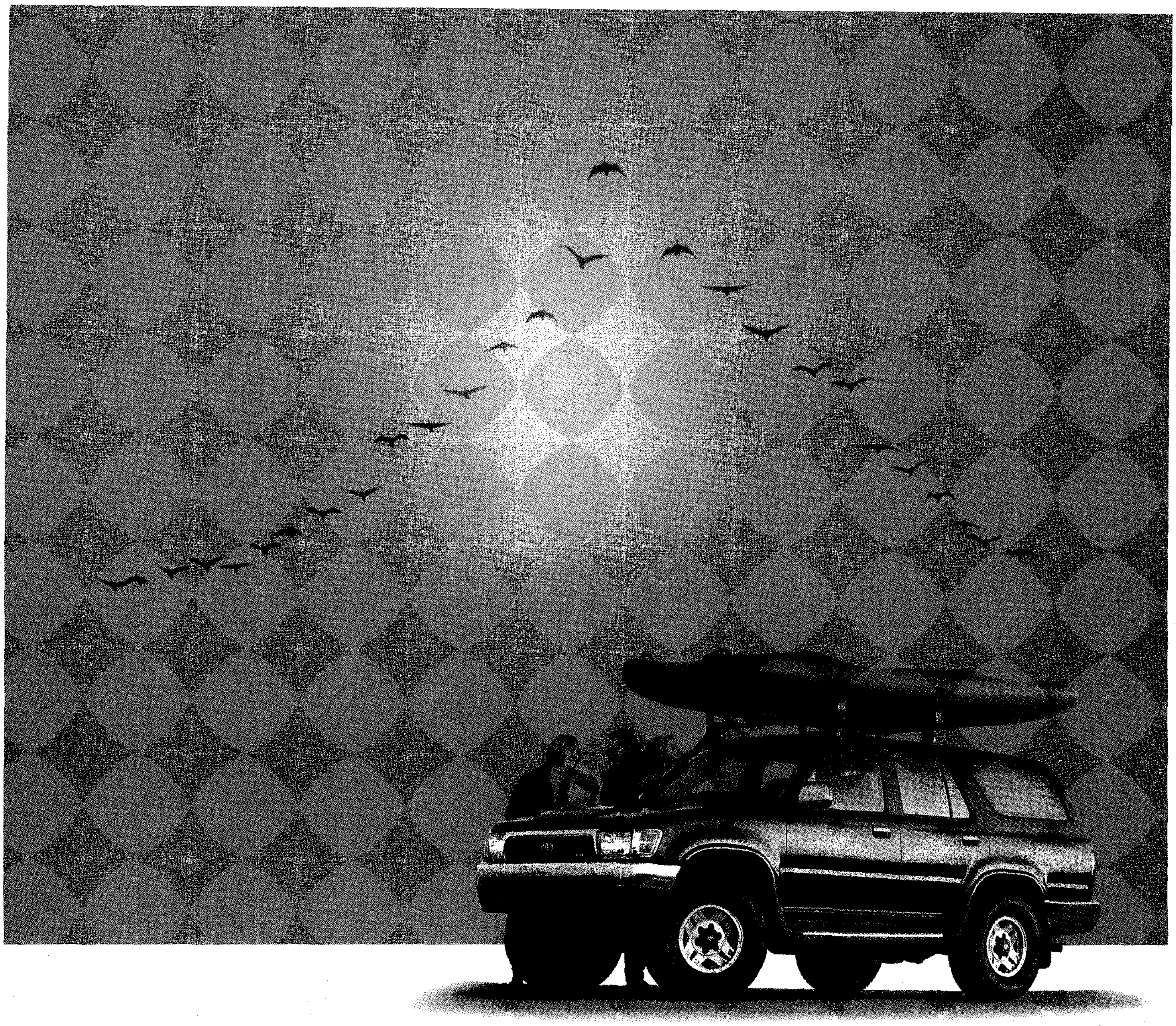

Why is it the farther away we travel the more we think about home? Is it the fear of not making it back? Or is it just our natural instinct.

Whatever the reason, here's some peace of mind: The Toyota 4Runner. With a reputation for reliability that's made the competition, well, a little bit envious.

Not to mention, the 4Runner has also been ranked by its owners as the Best Compact Sport Utility Vehicle in Initial Quality for three years running.*

Impressive? Yes. But not as impressive as what the rugged 4Runner carries on every journey. Like a 150-horsepower V6 engine. "Shift-on-the-move" 4WDemand. Rear Anti-lock Brakes.** Side-door impact beams. And a host of other creature comforts. Things some people call luxury, we just call basic. The 1994 Toyota 4Runner SR5 V6. For the way there. For the way back.

TOYOTA 4Runner

"I love what you do for me."

Call 1-800-GO-TOYOTA for a 4Runner brochure and the location of your nearest dealer. Toyota reminds you to *Tread Lightly!*™ on public and private land.

*J.D. Power and Associates 1991-1993 Initial Quality Studies.℠ 1993 study based on a total of 11,719 consumer responses *indicating owner-reported problems during the first 90 days of ownership.* Includes compact sport utility vehicles. **Available 4-wheel ABS on SR5 V6 models. Buckle Up! Do it for those who love you. ©1993 Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.